THE WHEEL

THE WHEEL OF LIFE

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

JAMES BERNARD FAGAN

NEW YORK
BRENTANO'S
PUBLISHERS

1922

First Published in 1922.
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Printed in Great Britain

THE CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

COLONEL JOHN DANGAN
GEORGE FARAKER
CAPTAIN LESLIE YEULLAT (" Tim ")
LIEUTENANT BUCKMASTEE (" Tubbs ")
LIEUTENANT O'REILLY (" Paddy ")
LIEUTENANT MACLAREN
LIEUTENANT MANNERS
TSERING LAMA
A GELONG
A GETSUL
A GURKHA NATIVE OFFICER
A GURKHA HAVILDAR
MAHOMET KHAN (Dangan's Kitmutghar
DAVID (Faraker's Bearer)
RUTH DANGAN
MRS FARAKER
AN AYAH

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THE SCENES OF THE PLAY

ACT I.

COLONEL DANGAN'S *Bungalow, at Jagpur—in the Plains.*

Two years elapse.

ACT II.

The Llakhang (Hall of the Gods) in a Buddhist Monastery in the Himalaya of Bhutan.

A night elapses.

ACT III.

The same.

THE WHEEL

Was first presented on February 1st, 1922, at the Apollo Theatre, London, under the management of Miss Phyllis Neilson-Terry, with the following caste.

Colonel John Dangan . .	Robert Horton
George Faraker . . .	Frank Denton
Captain Leslie Yeuillat (Tim)	Philip Merivale
Lieutenant Buckmaster .	Walter Menpes
Lieutenant O'Reilly .	Cyril Hardingham
Lieutenant Maclaren . . .	C. T. Davies
Lieutenant Manners . . .	Felix Irwin
Tsering Lama . . .	Randle Ayrton
A Gelong	Tiruvengadum
A Getsul	Jhangir
A Gurkha Native Officer . .	Bhagavat Ram
A Gurkha Havildar . . .	Krishnapalan
Mahomet Khan (Dangan's Kit-mutghar)	Mohan Lal
David (Faraker's Bearer) . . .	Jadu Singh
Ruth Dangan . .	Phyllis Neilson-Terry
Mrs Faraker	Edith Evans
An Ayah	Lydia Audre

TO MY WIFE

ACT 1

FIRST ACT

SCENE: *The drawing-room in* COLONEL DANGAN'S *bungalow at Jagpur, in the plains. The walls are in white distemper; the pictures principally regimental and shooting groups. There is an engraving of Queen Victoria in a gilt frame, also similarly framed engravings of the King and Queen. Above the rosewood cottage grand piano, which stands in the left corner of the scene, is hung a large photo of Watts' "Paolo and Francesca" in a wide green wood frame. In the centre is a wide opening, now closed by wooden shutters. On the right is a half door, with a space above and below for the passage of air; on the left a smaller half door. The doors and shutters are hung with striped muslin purdahs. The furniture is bamboo upholstered, or with loose cushions. On the right front a settee; near the piano a small table. A lamp on the piano, a standard lamp in the right corner, both lighted. From the ceiling hangs a red punka, and the rope by which is it worked disappears through a hole in the back wall.*

When the curtain rises, the punka is swinging, but getting slower and slower. In the distance, from one of the further rooms, the

last passage of a Melba song on a gramophone can be heard. The song ceases. A young man's voice calls out a derisive "Encore! Encore!" There is a laugh, then silence. The punka is swinging very slowly. MAHOMET, *the butler, opens the half door Left, and comes on with a tray of soda, whisky, and glasses, which he sets on the little table near the piano, then turns to go out. The punka, after a few faintly convulsive jerks, has now stopped.*

MAHOMET *glances up, then shouts.*

MAHOMET. Kencho! Kencho punka! [*The punka moves not. He opens the shutter at the back, sticks out his head, and shouts fiercely*]. Kencho! kencho! Tu Badmash! [*The punka swings violently.* MAHOMET *closes the shutter.*]

COLONEL DANGAN *and* GEORGE FARAKER *enter from left. The* COLONEL *is a man of fifty, lean and tanned, but not betraying his age except by his iron-grey hair and moustache. A resolute mouth and chin, and kindly eyes. He is in white mess kit.*

FARAKER *is fifteen years younger, rather dry and bloodless. He has a small but assertive moustache, scanty hair, and wears pince-nez. He has an irritating "House of Commons" manner and a habit of laying his lean fingers together at the tips. He was born old, and will never be young. He is a superior person.*

DANGAN. Really, it's extraordinary when you think of it! Fancy listening to Melba out here in the plains, with the temperature at 180°!

FARAKER. Yes. The world is growing very small—very small.

DANGAN. Just a machine and tin trumpet, and you can hear 'em all.

FARAKER. Covent Garden canned for export. Ha! ha! ha!

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] That's it! Peg, George?

FARAKER. Er—thank you.

DANGAN. [*Pouring out the regulation peg*] Say when.

FARAKER. A suspicion more—thank you.

DANGAN. [*Pouring out the soda*] I see you haven't got into our ways yet.

FARAKER. Eh? [*He takes the drink with very little soda*] Thank you. Thank you.

DANGAN. We take our pegs short and frequent, and all the soda. But indeed I've practically given up whisky myself. [*Pours himself out a small peg*] We don't drink nowadays. Good thing too! It's going out—it's going out. [*Fills up with soda.*]

FARAKER. [*Sipping*] Yes, yes, so everybody is saying.

DANGAN. Well, it's very pleasant seeing you again, George. Let me see, when was I home last?—It was your wedding.

FARAKER. Twelve years ago—twelve years and three months.

DANGAN. Twelve years — so it is—to give Cis away. Hm! [*Pause*] Home—do you know, I don't

think of it as home so much now—since I've married.

FARAKER. I expect Ruth will soon cure you of that idea.

DANGAN. No; that's the curious thing. I could have taken twelve months' leave last year. I suggested home and giving her a real good time. She wouldn't hear of it.

FARAKER. Regiment more attractive than relations, I suppose.

DANGAN. Perhaps. You see, Ruth doesn't know what she's missing. She was born in India, and has never been out of the country—except Ceylon, four years ago. We went there on our honeymoon.

FARAKER. Ruth was a Miss Farquaharson, wasn't she?

DANGAN. Yes.

FARAKER. Anything to the Hampshire Farquaharsons?

DANGAN. Don't think so. Farquaharson was in the Woods and Forests. Seven daughters he had, and not a bob besides his pay. They lived at Umtahla when he retired . . . sort of third class hill-station.

FARAKER. Dear me!—why didn't they go home?

DANGAN. Home! with seven daughters and the rupee at one and twopence! [*He laughs. Then, after a pause*] To a little dingy street in Hammersmith or Clapham, and daily struggles to pay the butcher and the baker . . . to dress decently. And for society—people they wouldn't be seen dead with here. [*Shakes his head, smiling*] Wise man, he didn't.

It's a weird sort of tragedy, the declining years of most of those who serve England in India—even the decent pensions. You're rooted out of the soil of your life's work long before you're old. You go to a strange place called home, where you've no interests and few friends, and there you lie—it's too late to strike fresh root—you lie and wither, surrounded by an alien race of your own fellow-countrymen. [*Rising*] Good Lord! I remember going to see old Nuttall—— [*Pouring himself out another peg*] Another peg, George?

FARAKER. No, thanks.

DANGAN. Used to be judge of the High Court—Punjaub, no end of a big bug out here—great chap! But *there*—what a life—deadly! It made me swear that if I can't die in harness, at any rate I'll hang about the old stable till I do peg out.

FARAKER. I wonder why they go?

DANGAN. The idea of home, I suppose, [*with a little laugh*] the irresistible call of Bayswater.

He turns over the leaves of a book of photos on the piano.

FARAKER. I mean to take up that subject. It's waste—waste of a fine body of public servants. I was talking to His Excellency about it. It's a great field for reform.

DANGAN. You'll find lots of those fields in India, George. The trouble is the reforms don't grow. [*He brings over the book*] Here's a photo of the Farquaharson girls—that's Ruth with the short frock and her hair down.

FARAKER. Ah! Some time ago, of course.

DANGAN. [*Shaking his head*] Six months before we married. You see, though she was nineteen, she had six unmarried sisters waiting on the roster.

FARAKER. How is it handsome girls like these don't get married out here? . . . I should have thought——

DANGAN. Oh, various reasons. They were poor. Then the mother died when they were young. She was Irish—lovely woman, I believe. Marriages are made in Heaven, but, by Jove! there's nothing like a mother to get the goods safely on the market down here.

FARAKER. Yes, yes . . . that's true.

DANGAN. Then they were pretty lively, go-ahead sort of girls, and some of them got . . . er . . . rather talked about.

FARAKER. Oh!

DANGAN. Oh, nothing but high spirits. Of course, cats are common to all civilized countries, but the cats of the small Indian stations, well, they're more poisonous than the snakes, anyway. [*Laughing*] Now, there's your field for reform, George.

FARAKER. In what way?

DANGAN. Start an asylum for the Christian cats of our Indian Empire.

FARAKER. [*Smiling and polishing his glasses*] I'm afraid, my dear John, you don't take my mission in India quite seriously.

DANGAN. Oh, of course, I'm only chaffing. By the way, your appointment was quite unexpected, wasn't it?

FARAKER. In a sense, yes—yes. You see, in the last two Parliaments I acquired a considerable reputation as an authority on Indian affairs, so when I lost my seat at the General Election—a scandalous affair, that fellow Sykes, you know, an upstart brewer, a ruffian, positively flooded the place with his filthy stuff——

DANGAN. And drowned you.

FARAKER. Only by three hundred and ten—three hundred and ten drunken dupes. However, it was decided to send me out here with Moncrief, in recognition of my services to the party——

During the last speech MRS FARAKER *enters and stands listening with an amused smile. She is a handsome, well-preserved woman, about forty-four.*

MRS F. Nonsense, George!

FARAKER. [*Turning*] My dear!

MRS F. You know perfectly well *I* got you the appointment.

FARAKER. Really, my dear!

MRS F. This is the true story, Jack. We were dining with old Lady Charwell. Witherington took me down, he's a devoted admirer of mine, and when we got to the ices—he'd had six glasses of champagne—I said: "Why don't you send George out with Moncrief? He's the shining light of the party on Indian matters. It's high time he learnt something about India. Besides, I want a nice trip." Three weeks later George sailed as assistant-private secretary to the new Viceroy.

FARAKER. Your sister's imagination is picturesque, but inaccurate.

MRS F. I approve of your wife, Jack. She's charming—much too nice for you.

DANGAN. Thanks, Cis. You always were frank.

MRS F. Mind, I haven't said I approve of you. The idea, at your age!

FARAKER. [*Holding up the book*] This was on the eve of her marriage [*Laughing*].

MRS F. [*Looking at the photo through her lorgnettes*] Perfectly ridiculous! You ought to have adopted her.

DANGAN. Look here, now, Cis! How many years older than George are you?

MRS F. Nothing to do with the case. George is the kind of man who needs a strong wife.

DANGAN. And I'm the kind of man who needs a young wife.

MRS F. Well, at any rate, you must let her come and stay with us up at Simla.

DANGAN. I'd be glad if she'd go. I've wanted her to get away in the hot weather. But she won't leave us. She looks on the regiment as her family, and she won't be happy away from it.

FARAKER. Very proper! very proper! In my view a wife's place is with her husband.

MRS F. Nonsense! It depends first on the husband, and then on the pace.

DANGAN. Your view isn't general here, George. A large percentage of married couples are divorced annually——

FARAKER. [*Sitting up*] You don't say so!

DANGAN. By the thermometer. The wife and family eat their bread in the hills, and the husband sweats his brow in the plains.

FARAKER. Ah, yes! I see, I see. Now, tell me —in your view—what is the effect of temperature on morals?

MRS F. "The higher the fewer" is George's idea.

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] I'm afraid I've never thought about it. When the thermometer jumps up we chuck as many clothes as we can, and——

FARAKER. [*Eagerly*] Yes?

DANGAN. Well . . . that's all. I expect we're pretty much the same as you are at home.

FARAKER. [*Disappointed*] And you really think that tropical climate has no loosening effect on European morality?

DANGAN. My dear George, try five or six weeks down here in the middle of the hot weather, and I'll bet you couldn't feel naughty, if you tried.

MRS F. [*Laughing*] The effect of hot weather on morals was settled once for all in the Mrs Potiphar case —Joseph cast his cloak, but he took his virtue away with him.

DANGAN. Of course—up in Simla——

FARAKER. [*Eagerly*] Ah, yes, now *there*——

DANGAN. Well, up in Simla, perhaps, Society does try to be as wicked as it is in London—but it's a miserable failure.

MRS F. [*Laughing*] I'm afraid George got his ideas of Indian society from some highly spiced novels.

He imagined an India over-run with semi-detached Delilahs and gay Lotharios in British uniform, so, naturally, he's disappointed.

FARAKER. [*Hurt*] You are scarcely fair, Louise. I merely seek information. [*To Dangan*] I am gathering details and collecting notes.

DANGAN. Are *you* writing a book about India?

FARAKER. When I have had time to sift this maëlstrom of phenomena which we call India, that is my intention.

DANGAN. I always think it must be awfully clever to write a book.

MRS F. Yes; that's a common mistake.

DANGAN. I mean, I don't believe I could write a line to save my life.

The shutters are opened and RUTH DANGAN *comes on hurriedly, followed by* BUCKMASTER *and* O'REILLY. RUTH *is a tall, beautiful woman, with great masses of hair. Her manner and freedom of movement suggest youth and strength—untamed.*

RUTH. Oh! have we been an awful time? I'm so sorry, Louise. We've been feeding the cheetah, and we couldn't catch him for ages.

DANGAN. I am afraid that beast's getting out of hand, Ruth.

RUTH. Oh, no, Jack! He's a darling.

BUCK. Beggar's claws are growing, though. [*Looks at the back of his hand.*]

RUTH. [*Anxiously*] He didn't scratch you, Tubbs?

BUCK. Oh! I love bein' scratched.

FARAKER. [*Rising*] A cheetah is a species of panther, is it not ?

RUTH. Yes. Oh ! but if you'd seen him when I got him first, the tiniest ball of soft yellow fur ! Why do things grow up ?

O'REILLY. We had to hunt him all round the compound. Then he turned on us. Luckily Tubbs had the beef, so he ate that, instead of us.

FARAKER. You don't say so ! Now, really . . . don't you think—a wild beast like that—it would be advisable to keep it chained up ?

RUTH. [*Indignantly*] Chained !

MRS F. How would you like to be chained just because you've grown up ?

FARAKER. My dear, *I* am not wild.

He goes to the back, where he looks through a book of photos with DANGAN.

BUCK. No cause for alarm, I assure you, Mrs Faraker. The beggar was as quiet as a lamb when the memsahib took him in her arms.

MRS F. That is always the safest way to soothe the savage beast.

RUTH. [*Sitting beside* MRS FARAKER *on the settee*] I've deprived you of your two young men. Disgraceful of me !

MRS F. [*Laughing*] I survive.

RUTH. Of course. I was really thinking of them. It's not often they have the chance of getting into the good books of a real burrah memsahib. You see, I am the mother of them all. I have to see they get their chances. [*Turning*] Paddy, come and be nice

to Mrs Faraker. [*To* MRS FARAKER] Mr O'Reilly is really a most deserving case.

O'REILLY. [*Laughing awkwardly*] You mustn't take her seriously, Mrs Faraker. [*To* RUTH] I say, memsahib, I shall blush in a minute.

RUTH. And blushes adorably.

MRS F. [*Laughing*] I'm afraid I shall make a very amateur burrah memsahib.

RUTH. Burrah memsahibs are born, not made. You're one. I saw it at once. You have all the marks. I can just see you up at Simla on a moonlight night sitting in a *Kalah jaggah,* dropping seeds of suggestion into official ears. And after many days, out of official mouths will come forth fruit.

MRS F. [*Looking from one to the other*] Of course, I was so dazzled by you all together at mess I couldn't quite take you in. Are you really the two brightest ornaments——?

BUCK. [*fixing his eyeglass*] Modesty compels me to admit that I am.

O'REILLY. I say, Tubbs, where do I come in? [*To* MRS FARAKER] As a matter of fact, our bright particular star wasn't at mess at all to-night. Wait till you meet Tim, Mrs Faraker.

MRS F. Tim?

RUTH. Tim is Captain Yeullat. [*Calling over the back of the settee*] Jack, why wasn't Captain Yeullat at mess to-night?

DANGAN. Yeullat? Oh! got some business on.

O'REILLY. He can knock us all out at anything—

polo, tennis, best shot in the regiment—top hole at everything.

BUCK. He's not as modest as I am.

O'REILLY. You know he ought to have got a D.S.O. for that scrap up at Nagar, last year.

RUTH. Yes.

MRS F. Why didn't he?

RUTH. Why? [*With a little laugh*] Because he neglects the whole duty of man. He forgets to bring his pitcher to the fountain of honour—he's too indifferent, or too proud, or too-something to pay his court to the burrah memsahibs.

The punka has been getting slower and slower.

BUCK. [*Who has been watching it*] Watch! The punka wallah's just off.

They all look up. The punka gives a little wriggle and almost stops.

There he goes! Here endeth the first snore.

The punka gives another wriggle.

DANGAN. [*Looking up from his book, calls*] Punka kencho! kencho!

A faint wriggle and the punka is still. FARAKER *is gazing up.*

BUCK. Sound!

He goes up to the back, taking a biscuit from the little table as he passes.

FARAKER. [*Looking up*] Curious—the rhythmical movement induces sleep, I suppose.

BUCKMASTER *opens the shutters, looks out and shouts.*

BUCK. Shaitan ke batcha! Dwai. [*He shies the biscuit vigorously*] Got him!

The punka gives a convulsive jerk, then swings violently.

Corking good shot—what? [*Laughing*].

FARAKER. [*Coming to him*] Now, in my view, that is the cause of much of our trouble in India.

BUCK. [*Blankly*] What!

FARAKER. [*Pointing with his glasses*] That attitude to the native. I observed you awaken that man by hurling a missile at him.

MRS F. George, don't be so censorious.

FARAKER. My dear, I feel very strongly in this matter. In my view this cavalier treatment of the native is at the bottom of the anarchist movement.

DANGAN. Inconsiderate treatment of natives is very rare, and it's getting rarer.

FARAKER. Well, I hope you're right. But I confess it's extremely alarming to pursue one's duties knowing that at any moment one may find oneself confronted by a bomb.

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] My dear George, we never think of it.

O'REILLY. We mustn't.

RUTH. Suppose the officer in charge of a powder magazine spent his time wondering when it was going to blow up.

BUCK. Did you ever hear, sir, what happened to old Hickson, the Collector?

FARAKER. No.

BUCK. Well, after the Dinapur outrage Hickson

never went anywhere without expecting to find a bomb. He was a bit hazy on the nature of bombs, so he thought of a great plan. He used to keep a bucket of water in every room in his bungalow——

FARAKER. And did he——

BUCK. No, he never found a bomb. But about once a week he used to fall over one of the buckets, and at last, one night after dinner he fell over the bucket in the dining-room and broke his leg in two places.

O'REILLY. Yes, and the best of it was what Flanigan, the doctor, said after he'd set his leg: "Hickson, my advice about bombs is—forget them. It's aisier to die once than to spend yer life kickin' the bucket."

RUTH. [*Rising*] I'm sure George would like a rubber before——

FARAKER. I confess I should. A rubber before retiring is a habit with me—I find it a real sedative.

RUTH. You'll play, Louise?

MRS F. I'm always agreeable. [*Rising*].

RUTH. And Tubbs—and you make a fourth, Jack.

DANGAN. You play, dear; I'm hopeless.

RUTH. No, I want to talk to Mr O'Reilly. [*To* MRS FARAKER] We play in there.

MRS FARAKER *and* BUCKMASTER *go out to the Right.*

FARAKER. When I can't get a rubber I find a game of patience an admirable narcotic.

DANGAN. Patience will help you a lot, George, if you get me for a partner.

They go out. RUTH *closes the door and turns*

to O'REILLY, *who has been pouring himself out a peg.*

RUTH. Well, now, what is this wonderful secret that you couldn't tell me till we were alone?

O'REILLY. [*With an awkward laugh*] I don't know that it's any easier now. [*Holding up his glass*] May I take a little Dutch courage to help me through?

RUTH. Sounds rather alarming, Paddy. Let me get quite comfortable. [*She settles herself in a long chair with her feet up. He arranges cushions behind her*] Now, I'm ready for the shock. Wait—give me some plain soda. Then I shall be able to give you sober advice.

He pours out a glass of soda.

O'REILLY. [*Handing her the glass*] Not too sober, memsahib. I want sympathy.

RUTH. If it's sympathy you want you needn't say another word. There are only two things it could be at your age—either you're in debt, or you're in love. If you're in debt, it isn't sympathy you want. . . . Who is she, Paddy? Not that Johnson girl?

O'REILLY. No.

RUTH. Don't say it's the Cheevely-woman.

O'REILLY. Good Heavens! No!

RUTH. That's a relief. You're just the kind to be caught. Who is she?—I can't go through all the list. Do I know her?

O'REILLY. [*Nodding*] Miss Murdoch.

RUTH. What? the little girl with the big eyes who never opens her mouth?

O'REILLY. Oh! she can talk like one o'clock.

RUTH. Alone in a corner—I dare say. Paddy, you're a dreadful flirt.

O'REILLY. No, now, memsahib. It's really serious. We're engaged.

RUTH. You're what?

O'REILLY. We want to be married in three months.

RUTH. Good heavens! . . . that is serious. And now, I suppose you want me to say "Bless you, my children."

O'REILLY. I want you to stick up for us, memsahib. Of course, I know what the C.O. will say——

RUTH. "Don't be a d——d young fool!"

O'REILLY. That, and more.

RUTH. Well, of course, I congratulate you. I hope you'll be ever so happy.

O'REILLY. Wait till you know her well, memsahib. I know she seems awfully quiet, but she thinks an awful lot, and she's read any amount. She makes me feel a regular ass, and—well, she's just the nicest girl in the world.

RUTH. "She" is always that. [*Laughing*] But—I think I feel a little bit like a mother feels, that her son is being taken away from her by some silly young thing who doesn't half know how wonderful he is.

O'REILLY. Oh, rot! memsahib. Why, I'm older than you are.

RUTH. Oh! years are nothing. And we *shall* lose you, Paddy. You'll still belong to the regiment, but not as you belong to it now. [*With a laugh*] And the happier you are, the further you'll be from it—that's the worst of it. Not at first, of course, but in a year—

two years. I wonder what you'll be like then—I wonder, will you get like Major Mallin—

O'REILLY. Oh! I say!

RUTH. It's funny; majors always seem to get like that—married and monotonous.

O'REILLY. Don't you think we're right?

RUTH. Right?

O'REILLY. To get married.

RUTH. [*Sitting up, looks at him, smiling, and shakes her head*] I think you're extremely foolish—and perfectly right.

O'REILLY. Thanks, memsahib.

RUTH. After all, if you know that she's the only one in the world for you, and that you are that for her—what else can matter? You'll be miserably poor and blissfully happy—and you're young, so you can stand a lot of both. [*Holding up her hands*] Bless you, my children. [*Laughing*] Don't I make a nice old lady, Paddy? I'm young enough to enjoy feeling old.

O'REILLY. You're a real brick, memsahib.

DANGAN. [*Outside*] No, no, I spoil the game—and it's not fair on George. [*He opens the door*].

RUTH. Bring her to see me to-morrow. I'll do all I can——

DANGAN. There now, I said it would happen—O'Reilly, take my place, like a good fellow.

O'REILLY. [*Going Right*] Yes, sir.

DANGAN. Revoked in the first hand. And the Lord knows what besides—judging from George's face.

O'REILLY. I say, sir, I hope he doesn't think I'm a crack, because——

DANGAN. Oh! you'll be all right.

O'REILLY *goes out.*

I ought to be blindfolded at bridge, then I might play a right card by accident.

RUTH. [*Sitting at the piano*] I fancy George is a trying partner.

DANGAN. Trying!—like playing with a standing reproach. But I'm worse than usual to-night—couldn't keep my mind on the game. I've been rather worried about something.

She begins playing Liszt's "Liebestraum" very softly. He lights a cigarette and stretches himself in an armchair Right. A pause.

RUTH. What is the matter?

DANGAN. Oh! regimental business—I can't tell you just now. [*A pause*] Yes, I like that tune.

RUTH. [*Laughing*] It isn't a tune.

DANGAN. Well—it's soothing, whatever it is. [*For a few moments she plays to him in silence.*]

RUTH. [*Playing more softly*] Jack.

DANGAN. Yes?

RUTH. Did you know that Paddy O'Reilly is going to be married?

DANGAN. What, again?

RUTH. Again? . . . he's not been married before.

DANGAN. No—but he's been going to be. [*Laughing*].

RUTH. It's serious—this time.

DANGAN. It always is. He wanted to get married when he was a sub. I explained the regulations to him—then twice since that.

RUTH. Twice, what?

DANGAN. Wanted to get married. He's Irish—they're all like that—Callaghan was the same—always wanting to get married. It's a national disease with them—like goître with the Swiss. But I can't worry about O'Reilly. I've got something much more important to think of.

RUTH. What ?

DANGAN. You'll all know to-morrow—probably. It's about Yeullat.

RUTH. [*Starting slightly, and lingering on the notes*] Nothing's happened to him ?

DANGAN. No, no. I promised to say nothing till—Oh, hang it ! a man needn't keep secrets from his wife—Yeullat's leaving us.

RUTH *stops playing abruptly, staring at him.*

RUTH. Leaving !—you mean going on leave ?

DANGAN. [*Shaking his head*] He's exchanging—going for good.

RUTH *sits perfectly still, staring in front of her.*

RUTH. [*Slowly, after a pause*] But it isn't possible.

DANGAN. You would have thought not. I expect he'll be in to see me to-night. I've heard from the Adjutant-General at Simla, so the thing is settled now—practically.

RUTH. Is he . . . going soon ?

DANGAN. As soon as he's heard from his new C.O. . . . Marshall's the man's name—46th Gurkhas; they're stationed at Kalpara.

RUTH. But what can have happened—why should he want to leave us ?

DANGAN. I'm hanged if I know why. No, that's

not true. He's given his reasons—several. He wants to save, for one thing—says he can't here. Then he wants to get frontier work—and of course he'll get plenty of that in the Gurkhas. And several minor reasons. But I must say I don't think he's behaving well to the regiment. Confound him! I believe it's nothing but sheer restlessness, when all's said and done.

RUTH. Is he—he's not in any trouble?

DANGAN. Trouble?—of course he's not. What trouble could he be in?

RUTH. In—debt. He might be in debt.

DANGAN. Do you know, I never asked him that. Yes, it's not impossible. Perhaps something can be done—even now. I'd do a good deal to keep Yeullat; he's the best officer in the regiment—understands the men. Of course, if he *wants* to go, we can't keep him. But it's worth trying.

RUTH. Why did he ask you to say nothing about his going—do you know?

DANGAN. Well, there was no good saying anything till it was settled. He told me he hated explanations—of course, naturally, he feels leaving us all, and—well, he asked me to keep it quiet. [*A pause.*]

RUTH. Yes—I understand.

MAHOMET *enters Right.*

MAHOMET. Captain Yeullat, sahib.

YEULLAT *comes on. He is a tall, spare, athletic-looking man, with a strong, clear-cut face and rather deep-set eyes.*

MAHOMET *withdraws.*

DANGAN. The very man I wanted to see, Yeullat.

YEULLAT. And I want to see you, sir—a few minutes when you can spare them. [*Shaking hands with* RUTH] How are you, memsahib?

RUTH. Why didn't you turn up at mess?

YEULLAT. I've been turning out papers and having a general rummage.

RUTH. Jack's sister and George Faraker have arrived. She wants to meet you. You must stay and be introduced.

YEULLAT. Delighted.

RUTH. You and Jack want to talk business now. I'll go and look after my bridge friends.

YEULLAT *opens the door for her. She goes out.*

DANGAN. Well, what is it, Yeullat? I suppose you've heard from——

YEULLAT. Yes, sir, I've just heard from Colonel Marshall. [*Taking a letter from his pocket*] He writes he'll be glad to have me at once, if you've no objection. The regiment has been short of officers for some time, and . . . This is his letter.

DANGAN *takes the letter and reads it through in silence, then looks up.*

YEULLAT. I can be ready in a few days. I've cleared up most of my affairs. And I thought I could have a sale of my belongings the day after to-morrow, and then get away the next day—perhaps.

DANGAN *folds the letter and hands it to him, then sits looking in front of him for a moment in silence.*

DANGAN. When you came to me about exchanging,

and told me why you wanted to go, I gave my consent; the matter's gone through now, and—well, I wish I hadn't, I wish I'd taken more time to consider—I don't want to let you go. Look here, Yeullat, it's not too late even now—won't you think it over again?

YEULLAT. If it would make any difference, I would. But I give you my word, sir, I'd thought it over for all I was worth long before I came to you.

DANGAN. How long have you been with the regiment . . . thirteen years, isn't it?

YEULLAT. Almost.

DANGAN. That's a long time, you know; you're not like a youngster who hasn't found his feet. It's a bad thing to change at your time—it does a man no good.

YEULLAT. I realise that.

DANGAN. I don't want to flatter you, but between ourselves, I think I'd rather lose any other man in the regiment. I like to feel that some day, when I'm on the shelf, the regiment might have you in command.

YEULLAT. I think the regiment will get over that loss, sir.

DANGAN. Of course, you know your own business best, but your reasons for going . . . they're not enough. I'd never have exchanged just because . . . tell me honestly now—what is your *real* reason for wanting to go?

YEULLAT *gives a slight, quick start, and looks sharply at him before speaking.*

YEULLAT. My *real* reason?

DANGAN. Yes; isn't it really just restlessness, desire for change?

YEULLAT. [*Relieved*] Perhaps—I don't think so.

DANGAN. You told me you wanted to save. Why should you? You're not married, and, as far as I know, not thinking of it, are you?—by the way, did you know O'Reilly's thinking of getting married?

YEULLAT. [*Smiling*] What—again, sir!

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] Yes, that's what I said. But, seriously, a vague desire to save doesn't justify the step you're taking. You're not in debt, Yeullat—is that the reason?

YEULLAT. [*Hesitating*] Well—yes, it is—partly.

DANGAN. I didn't know that. How much do you owe?

YEULLAT. I—I don't exactly know——

DANGAN. You don't know?

YEULLAT. I've a pretty general idea, of course.

DANGAN. A couple of thousand—three thousand rupees?

YEULLAT. I should think—about that.

DANGAN. I wish you'd told me this before. I ought to have asked you. Now, understand me, Yeullat, I'm not thinking of you—I'm thinking of the regiment. I'm going to be quite selfish in this matter. It's perfectly absurd to lose the best man we've got for three thousand rupees. I've got nearly a thousand pounds lying at Cox's—you know I meant to go home last year—I'll let you have three thousand, and you can pay me whenever you like—I don't care when it is.

YEULLAT. It's most awfully good of you, sir. I don't quite know what to say—to thank you. But I—I couldn't take it. It's out of the question.

DANGAN. Nonsense—if you're too proud you can pay me interest.

YEULLAT. It's not that—I can't take it. I'm sorry.

DANGAN. In fact, you've made up your mind to go—and there's no good my trying to alter it.

YEULLAT. Yes, sir. I've made up my mind.

DANGAN. [*With slight irritation*] Well, it's your affair—and I suppose you ought to know best.

YEULLAT. I—I hope, sir, you won't think I'm ungrateful—that I'm anxious to leave the regiment. Believe me, I—it isn't easy for me to go. But I've thought it out, and I know I ought to—I know I must go.

DANGAN. [*Putting his hand on his shoulder*] My dear fellow, of course I don't think that. I know you're doing what you think right. And now let's say no more about it. [*He turns and goes up stage a little*] By the way, what are you doing with that Arab mare—you're not taking her up with you?

YEULLAT. No, I couldn't use her up there—I'm afraid I must sell her.

DANGAN. I should like to buy her for Ruth. Ruth's very fond of her—she's ridden her a good deal. What do you want for her?

YEULLAT. I gave Thompson eighteen hundred rupees for her.

MRS FARAKER *comes on with* RUTH, *followed by* BUCKMASTER.

DANGAN. She's worth more than that now. But we'll talk of this to-morrow.

YEULLAT *rises.*

RUTH. Oh, Louise, I want to introduce Captain Yeullat. Captain Yeullat—Mrs Faraker.

MRS F. [*Shaking hands*] How do you do? I've been hearing wonderful things about you.

RUTH *goes to* DANGAN.

YEULLAT. [*Laughing*] I'm afraid they must have been pulling my leg, Mrs Faraker.

MRS F. Or mine.

YEULLAT. Oh, I wouldn't suggest that.

RUTH [*To* DANGAN] Well?

DANGAN. H'm! [*He shakes his head gloomily*].

RUTH *turns and stands staring at* YEULLAT *with a troubled expression.* FARAKER *and* O'REILLY *come on talking excitedly.*

FARAKER. You ought to have led a small trump, then taken over mine and given me a club, and we *must* have won the rubber.

O'REILLY. But I hadn't got a club.

FARAKER. But you ought to have had a club.

O'REILLY. But I'd discarded it.

FARAKER. But you oughtn't to have discarded it.

DANGAN. Did you win, George?

FARAKER. We ought to have won.

MRS F. George is painfully English—his defeats are always moral victories. [*Introducing them*] My husband —Captain Yeullat.

BUCK. [*Looking up at the motionless punka*] By jove, he's asleep again!

Goes up to open the shutters.

FARAKER. [*Going up*] One moment! Allow me—now you just allow me to show you what I mean. I'll set him to work again.

BUCK. Oh, certainly.

FARAKER. I know the words—I heard what you said.

He goes out at the back and disappears to the left.

BUCK. I say! There's a ripping cool breeze got up from the north. [*With his hand on the shutters*] Shall I open the jillmills, memsahib?

RUTH. Oh, please. [*He throws them wide open. She comes up.*] What a relief!

DANGAN. [*Looking up*] Cis, we shall have to keep George to look after our coolies.

MRS F. [*Laughing*] He began reforming India the moment he landed.

O'REILLY. [*Looking up at the motionless punka*] Don't seem to have much effect.

FARAKER *returns, putting on his glasses and smiling.*

FARAKER. Now that is my view of how these little things might be done.

MRS F. [*Looking up*] But it isn't done, George.

FARAKER. I simply shook him gently by the shoulder and said—quite nicely—"Sheitan kabutcha."

They all laugh except FARAKER *and his* WIFE.

FARAKER. [*Looking round*] Really, I——

DANGAN. [*Going to him*] My dear George, "sheitan kabutcha" means "son of the devil." Your words meant an insult, and your polite manner meant nothing.

Points up to the punka, which moves not. FARAKER *remains staring at it.*

RUTH. We shan't want him now—tell him.

To BUCKMASTER.

BUCK. [*Going out and calling*] Mut Kencho. Jao!

FARAKER. [*Taking off his glasses*] Of course I erred from ignorance.

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] What a motto, George, for Government offices at home—"We err from ignorance." It might teach 'em to trust the man on the spot.

The coolie passes the opening at the back, salaams, and disappears.

MRS F. [*Rising*] I think, Ruth, it's bed-time for us.

RUTH. I'll ring for your ayah [*Pressing bell*].

DANGAN. You've had a long day.

FARAKER. I'm distinctly tired—distinctly.

RUTH. You'll be able to sleep, it's gone so much cooler.

In the distance men's voices can be heard singing the chorus of "Hello! hello! hello! It's a different girl again."

MRS F. What's that singing?

FARAKER. Yes, I'd already remarked it.

DANGAN. Smoking concert, I think.

BUCK. [*Humming*] "Hello! hello! hello! it's a different girl again." That's Paddy's favourite song.

O'REILLY. Shut up!

MAHOMET *enters.*

RUTH. Buttie lao—Ayah ko bhejhdo.

MAHOMET *goes out.*

DANGAN. Isn't that the Lancers' smoker?

YEULLAT. Yes, sir. They start for home to-morrow.

BUCK. [*Fixing his eyeglass*] By Jove! the station'll be positively littered with broken hearts for months.

O'REILLY. [*To* MRS FARAKER] That's where Tubbs comes in.

MRS F. [*Laughing*] Universal consoler.

O'REILLY. Putting the pieces together—he has a kind of sticky philosophy that's irresistible.

BUCK. You're too brilliant to be up so late—come along. [*Going up to* RUTH] Time we were off, memsahib.

He says good-night to her.

O'REILLY. Good-night, Mrs Faraker. [*Shaking hands*] Got to do as I'm old.

MRS F. What—*before* you're married?

O'REILLY. You coming, Tim?

YEULLAT. Presently.

O'REILLY *goes up to* RUTH.

O'REILLY. Good-night, memsahib.

BUCK. Good-night, Mr Faraker. [*To* DANGAN] Good-night, sir.

They say good-night all round, then go out as MAHOMET *enters with four shaded candles on a tray, which he places on the piano, then lights two candles in response to a word from* RUTH. *The* AYAH *appears on the verandah outside.*

MRS F. [*Rising*] Come along, George.

FARAKER. [*Turning*] Eh? Oh!—yes! [*He resumes*

boring DANGAN, *with outstretched glasses*]—and as I was saying—the natives—in my view—[*The rest is lost.*]

MRS F. [*To* YEULLAT] Good-night. Are you playing to-morrow?

YEULLAT. Yes. I play for the regiment.

MRS F. We shall meet again, then. [*She goes up*] Good-night, Ruth.

RUTH. Good-night, dear. [*They kiss*].

DANGAN. A night-cap, George. [*Indicating the whisky*].

FARAKER. [*Dazed at suddenly being hauled out of his discussion*] Ah! er! [*With emphasis*] No! I never take anything before going to bed.

MRS F. Yes, dear, you take a candle. [*Handing him one lighted candle and taking the other herself*] Good-night, Jack.

DANGAN. [*Kissing her cheek*] Good-night.

RUTH. Along the verandah is the easiest—your room's the fourth—the ayah'll show the way.

MRS FARAKER *goes out on the verandah and disappears Left with the* AYAH.

FARAKER. [*Following, candle in hand*] Good-night, good-night. Good-night, Ruth.

YEULLAT. Good-night.

FARAKER. [*Outside*] I suppose there's no danger of our encountering—er—any creatures—any reptiles?

DANGAN. Good Lord! You don't expect to see snakes after *one* whisky and soda!

RUTH. [*Going out*] No, no—it's quite safe.

FARAKER *goes off Left.*

And the cheetah's had his supper.

FARAKER and MRS F. [*Outside*] Good-night—good-night.

RUTH. Good-night.

DANGAN. I don't know why it is, but the effect George has on me is to give me a confounded thirst. *Pouring himself out a drink.*]

RUTH. [*Holding up her hand*] Hush!

DANGAN. [*In a whisper. Laughing*] Have a peg, Yeullat?

YEULLAT. No, thanks.

RUTH. [*Speaking softly as she comes in*] His views on everything seem to have come out of books—the wrong books.

YEULLAT. Mrs Faraker seems a very charming woman.

RUTH. Oh, she's a dear—she's sure to be a great success.

DANGAN. Yes, and George will take it all to himself. [*He finishes his drink and sets down the glass*] Yeullat, I've been telling my wife to-night about this business—about your going. I knew you wouldn't mind—now it's settled.

YEULLAT. Oh, of course not, sir.

RUTH *is standing looking out at the back.*

DANGAN. I needn't tell you that she feels your leaving us every bit as much as I do—don't you, Ruth?

RUTH. I can't understand it—[*Turning*]—it seems so absurd—just the kind of thing that couldn't happen.

YEULLAT. I'm—awfully sorry to go, memsahib. You—you've all been so awfully good to me. But it just can't be helped—so I've got to make the best of it.

DANGAN. Of course we'll see you again—you must come and stay with us, the first leave you get.

YEULLAT. Thanks. India's not a very big world after all.

RUTH. You'll be on the frontier most of the time?

YEULLAT. Yes, Bhutan way. I expect I shall be kept pretty well fed up with work.

DANGAN. You'll soon be sighing for the flesh-pots of Jagpur. By the way, Ruth, I'm going to buy Tara for you.

RUTH. You're going to part with Tara?

YEULLAT. I shan't feel I've parted with her if she's with you. I wish, sir—I hate the idea of selling her—I wish you'd just let me leave her with you for Mrs Dangan to ride.

DANGAN. Nonsense, nonsense—never heard of such a thing!

YEULLAT. I mean it, sir. I can't take her, and I'd really rather not sell her. You'd be doing me a favour, and——

DANGAN. Preposterous! But we'll settle all that to-morrow. I'm going to bed now. I'm dog tired, and we've got early parade.

YEULLAT. [*Rising*] Yes—it's quite time.

RUTH. Don't go yet.

DANGAN. No, no need for you to go—you're young. Besides, though I've agreed to say no more [*Putting his hand on* RUTH'S *shoulder*] I imagine Ruth would

like to try and show you the error of your ways. Good night, Yeullat.

YEULLAT. Good night, sir.

DANGAN *goes out through the door on the Left.*

YEULLAT. I really ought to be going, memsahib.

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No. I want to ask you—a lot of things. [*She sits on the settee*].

He looks at her for a second, then sits down. Tim, why wasn't I told of this? We've been good friends, haven't we?

YEULLAT. Yes.

RUTH. We've seen each other every day, we've talked of everything under the sun, and never a word of this—[*Quickly*] and it's funny. I knew something was coming, knew it, felt it—as one feels a thunderstorm before a cloud's in the sky.

YEULLAT. I didn't see the good of worrying you about it till there was something definite to tell. I—— [*He hesitates*].

RUTH. I should have thought you'd have told me before anyone—I thought I was your best friend——

YEULLAT. You're the best friend I shall ever have.

RUTH. Were you afraid I should try to prevent your going?

YEULLAT. Perhaps—yes, I suppose I was.

RUTH. You were right. I should have tried. I don't want you to go. I don't know why on earth you're going—at least, Jack told me the reasons you gave him, but they're nothing—they're nothing. You wanted to save, he said. We thought you might be in debt, but I know it can't be that—not seriously.

YEULLAT. The C.O. was most awfully good about it—he wants to lend me money. I couldn't take it, of course. Besides, it isn't only that——

RUTH. Then what? It's not for better chances of promotion? You're not gaining by going, Tim; you're losing.

YEULLAT. I want more active work. I'm pretty sure to see some fighting—I shall get chances——

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] Tim, not one of these reasons is the least bit real. Don't you think I know? I want to ask you a question. Have I anything to do with your going?

YEULLAT. You, memsahib—how could you?

RUTH. Tell me the truth. I want to know, I must. Are you going because of me?

YEULLAT. [*Firmly, and looking straight at her, after a pause*] No.

She looks at him for a second, then goes up and stands looking out into the night. A slight pause.

RUTH. Yes. I knew you must answer that. That was like yourself. [*She turns and comes down*] But it's no use, Tim, because I know—I have known for a long time. [*She speaks slowly and quietly, and stands watching him, with a plaintive smile on her lips.*] YEULLAT *sits rigid, his mouth tightly closed, staring at the ground.*

After a pause.

Well?

YEULLAT. [*After a moment's silence, speaking with effort*] Well . . . you see now . . . I *must* go.

RUTH. Why? Why couldn't we go on just as we were—just friends? We might have—if you hadn't broken it—broken the spell. And it was so good . . . our friendship . . . it could have gone on and on . . . and then, suddenly, this . . . and it's all a ruin. Oh! why couldn't you let things be as they were?

YEULLAT. [*With sudden, passionate force*] I couldn't!

RUTH. [*After a pause*] Yes—I understand.

YEULLAT [*in a low voice*] I was afraid—I knew I couldn't go on seeing you day after day and not speak. I was beginning to be afraid of myself—the only strength left was—strength to go. I—[*abruptly*] I'm a fool. Why am I saying this? Forgive me, memsahib—I meant——

RUTH. Just to go—without a question . . . a thought of what was broken—what was hurt.

YEULLAT. There's nothing else—

RUTH. And when you've gone?

YEULLAT. Well—then it'll be all right.

RUTH. And what is to become of me?

YEULLAT. [*Staring at her*] You?

RUTH. There is no place for me to go to. I shall be here, living on . . . day after day . . . the old life—in an empty house.

YEULLAT. You!—memsahib—but what is it—you don't—you don't care . . . like that?

RUTH. Do you think I would have made you speak—if I hadn't—— [*She turns away with a sudden cry*] Oh, I can't bear it!—I can't bear it! [*She leans on the*

piano, hiding her face in her hands. He stands staring at her. In a moment she looks up, clenching her hands]. No—no! I mustn't say that——

YEULLAT. I never knew.

RUTH. Tim, do you remember a day—four months ago nearly—we'd been for a long ride by the Ghauts, and on the way back we stopped at the ruin of the Siva Temple. I had climbed up—I was lying on the broken gate pillar, leaning over, and you were standing below. We were talking Buddhism, and I said I believed in re-incarnation—that I wanted to believe in it. And you asked me what I thought I was, before I was myself.

YEULLAT *bends his head in acquiescence.*

And—I didn't know what I was saying, it just came out—I said: "Something where you were."

YEULLAT. Yes.

RUTH. For a second there was a strange light in your eyes, but you looked away at once. Well, I knew then—I knew about you, and about myself. I felt as if I'd been lifted up, suddenly, to the top of a mountain, and down below, far, far below, the whole world with the sun on it——

YEULLAT. Yes, it was that day. I never dreamt you knew. . . . It stunned me. . . . I could think of nothing but you . . . and then, I began to hate myself, almost.

RUTH. I suppose we are different. I remember nothing else—on the way home—I couldn't hear what you said—I didn't see what we passed—I remember nothing but the sound of the horses' hoofs, beating

on the road, beating, beating, "I love you—I love you —I love you." . . . I was mad.

YEULLAT. Ruth!

RUTH. And then, soon, when I had come to myself, I hid it away—the sudden joy that had come. I never thought of it, I never looked at it—I just knew that hidden away in my heart was the most wonderful thing in the world . . . and I was happy. . . . I could have gone on being happy . . . just like that . . . on and on. [*Suddenly*] Tim, why are you going? . . . You needn't . . . you needn't.

YEULLAT. Now more than ever, memsahib. . . . Good God! yes. After to-night—if I stayed, do you think I could look the C.O. in the face and not feel—— No, no, there's only one thing to do.

RUTH. [*Nodding her head slowly*] Yes, it's right—I suppose that's right. I know I care for him as I have always cared for him. He's the best . . . I couldn't hurt him. If he were different it would be be—so easy.

YEULLAT. It's my fault from the beginning. At the first thought—I should have gone—leave, anything. And I've let you drag it out of me—that's made it harder now for both of us. Memsahib, you knew . . . you knew. Why did you make me tell you?

RUTH. I don't know. [*With a little shrug of her shoulders*] I suppose women are like that. We know the hidden things by instinct—yet can't leave them hidden. They must come out—and give up their mysteries. [*She turns away and sits at the piano, staring at the notes*] Will you write to me? [*A slight pause.*]

YEULLAT. No, memsahib.

RUTH. [*After a pause*] No. [*She bends her head several times*] You'll come sometimes—when you get leave?

YEULLAT. No, memsahib. [*A pause*] It's got to be final.

RUTH. [*After a pause*] Final. [*One hand wanders aimlessly over the keys, playing broken snatches of melody. She breaks off abruptly*] What have we done, that life should do this to us?

He looks at her for a second, then turns away, clenching his hands, and stands looking out at the back. Again the chorus of "Mandalay" is heard faintly in the distance. After a time he turns.

YEULLAT. Good night, memsahib—I've got to be going. And it will be good-bye, too.

RUTH. [*Rising*] I shall see you to-morrow—and next day——

YEULLAT. With the whole of the station—to say good-bye.

RUTH. [*Forcing a laugh*] The penalty of popularity—you're paying now.

YEULLAT. And, memsahib, we mustn't think, we mustn't *think*. We must find plenty to do—then it'll be forgotten—forgotten.

RUTH. Yes. [*Nodding*] I can only be honest with myself. I can promise that some day . . . I will try to forget. [*A pause*] But not yet.

YEULLAT. Good-bye—memsahib.

RUTH. [*Giving him both her hands*] Good-bye—Tim.

He takes her hands, then bends down as though about to kiss them, then stops, with a short, hard laugh.

YEULLAT. We just mustn't think. [*He wrings her hands, turns quickly, and goes out through the compound*].

RUTH *stands motionless with her hands still stretched out. "God save the King" is heard in the distance, played by a regimental band. She looks round dazed, then presses bell, and leaning against the shutter, stands looking off after* YEULLAT.

In a few moments MAHOMET *appears.*

MAHOMET. Memsahib.

RUTH. [*Without turning*] Buttie bujao. Moum buttie cilgao. Our kutch nay chahiyeh.

MAHOMET *puts out the standard lamp, lights a candle, puts out the lamp on the piano, then goes noiselessly off. The room is dark save for the flickering candle.* RUTH *stands silhouetted against the moonlit compound outside. In the distance a bugle sounds "Lights out." Then, a second later another further away.* RUTH *closes the shutters and bolts them, then goes to the piano, where she stands motionless in the candle light. She bends over the piano, hiding her face in her hands, crying silently.*

CURTAIN.

ACT II

SECOND ACT

SCENE:—*The Llakhang (hall of the gods) at Sana Gompa, a Buddhist monastery in the Himalaya of Bhutan. The ceiling is supported by heavy beams. In the back wall of the scene, which is set obliquely, the centre is occupied by a wide entrance, flanked by polygonal columns of red wood, with carved and elongated capitals. This entrance is closed by heavy curtains of coarse crimson serge, crossed by two horizontal yellow stripes and finished at the top by a valance. The curtains are at present drawn back, showing a corridor outside. In the wall of the corridor, opposite the entrance, is an opening of the same width, guarded by a four-foot parapet, and looking out over the hills, range upon range, and in the distance snow-capped peaks. Outside on the right, near the opening, a couple of bare tree stems stick up from below, to which are attached silken streamers, prayer flags, fluttering in the wind. Further to the left can be seen the top of the spire of a Chorten, with the carving of a lotus on the point. On the right corner of the parapet stands a large earthen pitcher. In the hall, on either side of the entrance, are wall cupboards, breast-high, full of pigeon-holes, containing the sacred books. On the walls above are frescoes,*

on the right scenes from the life of Buddha, on the left a huge painting of the Wheel of Life. Near the left side of the entrance stands a tall lamp in wrought brass in which a flame is burning. In front of this is a low divan. Further down to the right are three or four bulging sacks with a side-saddle placed on them, a piece of improvised furniture obviously of recent introduction. In the centre of the left wall, which is covered with frescoes, is a door. In the centre of the right side of the scene is an altar with two tiers, on which is seated a huge gilt image of the Buddha. Above its head hangs a small punka, and below, a row of small lamps with reflectors throw the light up it, making it look ghostly in the flickering glare. On the tiers of the altar are a number of brass and copper butter lamps, with tiny wicks, burning, a silver model of a chorten, a looking-glass and all kinds of bells, vessels and little shrines in silver, copper and brass. Silken streamers hang in clusters over the altar; in front of it tankhas, or frameless pictures. Everything is old, faded, dim in colour. On either side of the altar stand dark, towering figures of the lamaistic saints, looking out between the row of pillars which extends down the right side of the scene. The wall on this side is invisible, so that the figures stand forward in niches of gloom. A prayer drum and a couple of huge bronze trumpets on a stand are on either side of the altar. The amber light of late evening streams in from outside, making a pathway down the centre of the scene.

The left side of the scene is in the warm yellow light from the tall lamp. The right side of the scene is in gloom, save from the flickering lamplight on the image of the Buddha.

When the curtain rises an old LAMA *in the yellow robe of the Gelukpa sect is discovered seated cross-legged on a low divan in the right corner above the altar. His white hair is cut close, and his clean-shaven face is much wrinkled and the colour of old ivory. He is lost in contemplation and gazing before him into vacancy. On the ground, a little to the left and further down, a young Getsul, or novice, sits cross-legged, swinging a little prayer wheel and staring at the Buddha. Outside in the corridor, on the right of the opening at the back, a* NATIVE OFFICER *belonging to a Gurka regiment is crouching down and watching something intently through field-glasses, which rest on the ledge. After a few moments' silence three distant rifle shots are heard on the left. The* OFFICER *quickly swings his glasses round in the direction of the shots, then drawing back from the parapet, crosses the opening and crouches down close to the parapet on the left, looking out in that direction. The young Getsul rises a moment later, and slowly crossing the corridor, goes out Right. A few moments' silence, then a single shot in the distance.*

Silence again, then three deep blasts on a brazen trumpet are heard, then a deep-toned bell begins to toll. The LAMA *bends his head three times towards the Buddha, and his lips begin to move as he murmurs the ten precepts, the three refuges, etc. Only occasionally is the sound of his voice audible. A Gurkha* HAVILDAR *and* TROOPER *enter Right, and stand behind the* OFFICER.

OFFICER. [*Turning*] Such hai—woh shungar unke kubse men hai.

HAVILDAR. Main ne dekha ke wey tangi huay hain.

OFFICER. Maclaren sahib ko bolo khub unko yehan se dekh sukhtey hain.

The TROOPER *salutes and goes off Right. The* HAVILDAR *crouches down beside the* OFFICER *peering over the parapet. The bell stops.*

THE LAMA. [*His voice rising in prayer*] Namo tassa b'agavato arahato sammasambudd'assa! Evam me sutam: Ekam samajam B'agava . . . [*His voice falls away, only his lips move*].

The OFFICER *and* HAVILDAR *murmur together about something; only the tones are audible. A pause.*

LAMA. . . . kakk'ukarani nanakarani upasamaja ab'innaja sambod'aja nibbanaja samvattati. . . .

His voice dies away. MACLAREN, *a ruddy-faced, red-headed young officer in Gurkha uniform, appears in the corridor with the* TROOPER.

HAVILDAR. [*Turning*] Neche bitho, huzoor—asta lo.

MACLAREN *creeps up and takes the* HAVILDAR'S *place. Two more shots.* MACLAREN *takes the glasses from the* OFFICER. *A pause.*

LAMA. Sammavaka, sammakammanto.
Sammaagivo sammavajano.
Sammasati sammasamadi.

His voice dies away. Again two shots are heard, then silence. After a few moments YEULLAT *comes on Right. He is in Gurkha uniform and bareheaded. He stands some way behind* MACLAREN.

YEULLAT. [*After a pause*] Well?

MACLAREN. [*Turning and nodding his head*] Quite right.

He hands the field-glasses back to the NATIVE OFFICER, *scrambles back to* YEULLAT'S *side and rises. The two come down together.*

MACLAREN. Yes, it's right enough—the beggars have occupied that boulder now—swarming on it.

YEULLAT. Humph! Well, we're no worse off.

MACLAREN. No. [*Shaking his head*] Except they can enfilade the openings on this side now.

YEULLAT. The only place one could get a breath of fresh air without a bullet in it. [*Sitting on the saddle*] I say, the stink downstairs——[*Takes a map from his pocket*].

MACLAREN. [*Nodding*] Pretty poisonous.

YEULLAT. Wheugh! These old lamas have developed the most powerful odour of sanctity that I've ever——

MACLAREN. [*In a lower voice*] Take care—the Lama's there. [*Nodding his head in the direction of the* LAMA].

YEULLAT. What?

Spreading the map on the ground in front of him. MACLAREN *comes close to him.*

MACLAREN. He can understand you.

YEULLAT *points incredulously to the* LAMA. He knows English pretty well. Seems someone took him over there about twenty years ago—theosophists or something.

YEULLAT. Did they, by Jove!

MACLAREN. I only found out the day before yesterday. . . . Faraker told me . . . he'd been talking to him.

YEULLAT *bends over the map and begins making notes in a pocket-book. The* NATIVE OFFICER *rises and says something in a low tone to the* HAVILDAR, *who salutes and goes off Right, then after a word to* MACLAREN, *who has come up, follows the* HAVILDAR *off.* MACLAREN *takes a stump of a cigarette from his case, fastens it in the hinge end of a hair-pin which he uses as holder, then strikes a match and comes down to* YEULLAT.

MACLAREN. [*Lighting up*] Wonderful how precious . . . tobacco gets . . . when there's a chance of . . . [*Blows out the match*] I've had three smokes out of this cigarette.

YEULLAT. [*Looking at him*] What's that wire entanglement?

MACLAREN. Borrowed a hairpin. [*Laughing*] Up to yesterday I smoked 'em till they burnt my fingers —now I can smoke till they burn my lips. [*He inhales a puff luxuriously*] I've got exactly four cigarettes left.

YEULLAT. Hum! I'm getting near my last pipe. [*He bends forward, leaning his elbows on his knees, staring at the map and whistling windily for some moments. Then he breaks off in the middle of a bar. For a few seconds there is silence*] Mac.

MACLAREN. Yes.

YEULLAT. [*Very quietly, still staring at the map*] Do you know, I'd been counting on the relief force getting in touch with us not later than last night.

MACLAREN. Pretty stiff country, you know.

YEULLAT. Allowing for that.

MACLAREN. I don't think a day——

YEULLAT. The day's over and there's no sign of them.

MACLAREN *goes down on one knee and looks at the map.*

MACLAREN. Still, if the Khams show fight, there may have been a check . . . anywhere between Langano and Domgit Dzong.

YEULLAT. Yes, that's possible.

MACLAREN. If there's been fighting to-day——

YEULLAT. We'd have heard the firing.

MACLAREN. [*Looking out at the fluttering prayer flags*] No. The wind's east.

YEULLAT. [*Looking out*] That's so.

MACLAREN. Been east the last two days.

YEULLAT. They'd be able to signal us as soon as they cross Chando La.

MACLAREN. Yes. I suppose they're bound to come that way.

YEULLAT. Unless they're mad. It's as plain as a pike-staff. Send them up the Cooch Behar line. [*Tracing with his finger on the map*] Detrain Buxa road station . . . metalled road to Buxa. Then path from Sinach La, cross by Wong Chu there. Then come up the Par Chu valley by Tashigong, Paro, and Langano. It's less than eighty miles. We should have heard from them last night . . . including accidents.

MACLAREN. Suppose they've sent 'em from Darjeeling?

YEULLAT. It would take them ten days to reach us—and we shouldn't be here when they did.

MACLAREN. That's an Irish bull.

YEULLAT. Yes, but it's not funny, when you remember we've barely sixty rounds of ammunition.

MACLAREN. [*Staring at the map*] I wonder now . . . I wonder if some bally idiot who thinks he knows, *has* sent them from Darjeeling.

YEULLAT. [*Shaking his head*] No. I telegraphed from Yatung on the seventh that your force was cut off north of the Par Chu valley, that I was leaving to try and get in touch with you, and that I'd meet them myself or send word down the valley to meet them. It's three days since I got in here; that's six clear days since they had the news. If we don't hear from 'em to-morrow—I shall be wondering what's happened.

MACLAREN. You don't think——

YEULLAT. [*Quickly*] Of course I don't think.

FARAKER *comes on from the corridor on the right. He is in riding kit, but looking rather dilapidated and untidy. He carries in his hand a small aluminium folding tumbler containing some water.*

FARAKER. [*Seeing them*] Ah! [*He comes over*] Now, tell me, can we be certain that this water is safe?

YEULLAT. Where did you get it?

FARAKER. The Havildar gave it to my bearer.

YEULLAT. That's the well water, then—we're all drinking it.

MACLAREN. How's your wife this evening?

FARAKER. Oh, better, better—she's had a sleep. [*Looking at water*] But that proves nothing. I'm beginning to have my suspicions. Can we trust it, I say? Can we trust that well?

YEULLAT. Better ask the Lama.

FARAKER. The Lama—yes, yes, I will. [*He moves a few steps towards the* LAMA, *then turns*] You know, I find it extremely difficult to extract information from him when he's in that condition. At times he ignores me—actually ignores me. [*He goes towards the* LAMA] Ahem, Lama! [*The* LAMA *does not move*] Ahem, Lama! [*Loudly*].

The LAMA *remains impassive. After a pause* FARAKER *goes close to him.*

Might I ask you if, in your view, this water, the well water, is safe, quite safe—not dangerous to human

life? [*He holds out the tumbler. The* LAMA *is motionless. A pause*].

YEULLAT *and* MACLAREN *exchange a glance of amusement.*

MACLAREN. Why not boil it?

FARAKER. [*Coming back to them*] I have boiled it. But you know there are certain microbes——

MACLAREN. [*To himself*] Yes, I know there are.

YEULLAT. Will you warn the memsahibs to keep away from the openings along that corridor?

FARAKER. Why?

YEULLAT. The Khams have got out on the boulder beyond the precipice over there. They can't fire in on us, but they might pick off anyone who leant on the parapet.

FARAKER. That's a nice business. Why did we let 'em get there? Why don't we do something . . . make a sortie . . . something?

MACLAREN. [*Grinning*] We've only thirty-two men, Faraker . . . can't spare 'em. But of course, if you'd like to make a little sortie——

FARAKER. That's not my business. But in my view there's no enterprise. We've been shut up here a week . . . a whole week . . . and we just sit here. To-day we haven't fired a shot . . . since they attacked at daybreak, not a shot . . . not a shot.

YEULLAT. [*Quietly, folding up the map*] No, and we shan't fire a shot before we're relieved . . . I *hope*.

FARAKER. Well, I say that's wrong . . . quite wrong. In my view——

Three distant shots ring out—ping, ping, ping.

Listen to that! Sniping us from morning to night. Why don't we stir them up . . . let them know we're here . . . keep at them . . . ?

YEULLAT. Look here, Faraker, just let me tell you something. It's entirely your fault that we're here at all.

FARAKER. [*Bristling*] Mine ?

YEULLAT. You got special government permits for this tour of yours in Bhutan, expressly stating you were not to go further than Chundi Gompa. As a matter of fact, just now, they'd no business to let you come at all. But that's their fault. What do you do ? In spite of warnings, you come thirty miles further north, and if Maclaren hadn't chanced to hear there was a touring party wandering up near Sana, you wouldn't have been *anywhere* by now.

FARAKER. I quite admit it was inadvisable——

YEULLAT. Inadvisable ! Do you realise that every village north of Chundi that supplied you with fodder will get into trouble ? That Maclaren and his company are shut up here, instead of being safe down at Yatung days ago ? And that a relief force, with guns, has to be rushed up to get you out of this mess ? Considering the circumstances, I should really have thought you would have very little to say.

FARAKER. Yes—but my point is this——

YEULLAT. [*Between his teeth*] Oh ! shut up—for God's sake. [*He turns away, then says quietly*) I beg your pardon, Faraker. But—either go to bed—or mind your own business. I'm fed up with this.

MRS FARAKER *enters from the passage Right*

front, leaning on RUTH'S *arm. Both women are in riding habits, travel stained, and their hair is loosely and carelessly done.* MRS FARAKER, *who wears a big woollen overcoat, shows signs of the strain they are going through, but* RUTH *appears serene and happy.*

MRS F. Is there any—any news?

YEULLAT. To-morrow—we shall hear to-morrow, Mrs Faraker.

MRS F. To-morrow—it was to-morrow yesterday.

YEULLAT. [*With a laugh*] Well, to-morrow it will be to-day—I promise you. I was too sanguine; the relief force couldn't possibly get in touch with us before to-morrow.

FARAKER. In the meantime the Khams are sniping us from this side now—and it seems we are to do nothing.

He takes out a clinical thermometer, shakes it, and puts it in his mouth.

YEULLAT. You're perfectly safe here. Just keep out of that corridor—at least, as long as there's daylight.

MACLAREN. You may do anything except look at the view.

MRS F. [*Sitting on the divan, Left*] It feels cold here. [*Shivering a little.*]

RUTH. I'll get you my shawl—you mustn't get a chill.

She goes into the room Left.

YEULLAT. But you're better to-night?

MRS F. Oh, I'm well now. It was only a touch of

fever. I've had quinine and sleep. I shall be on the effective strength of the garrison to-morrow.

YEULLAT. [*Cheerily*] To-morrow — that's right! Everything will be right—to-morrow.

He goes out Right.

MRS F. I feel so well I should just love a cigarette, and there isn't one.

MACLAREN. Cigarette—why, of course—I've got some. [*Takes his case from his pocket and opens it*].

MRS F. No, no, I couldn't think of it: you've only four.

MACLAREN. Any amount more in a box down below.

MRS F. On your honour?

MACLAREN. Honest Injun!

RUTHS *returns with a light shawl.*

MRS F. [*Taking one*] You're a most deserving person.

RUTH. [*Wrapping the shawl round* MRS FARAKER'S *shoulders*] Smoking! You must be feeling strong.

MRS F. Thanks, dear. [*She lights her cigarette from a match held by* MACLAREN] Thanks; you've saved my life for the second time. George! What on earth are you taking your temperature for?

FARAKER. [*Waving his hand*] Um! um! um! um!

MRS F. Good heavens! I hope *he's* not going to have fever.

The LAMA, *who has risen a moment before, comes to* FARAKER, *who is standing near the passage on the right front.*

LAMA. The sahib would know if the water of the well be good. It is good. Two hundred years men here have drunk it; it is not known that any found

ill therein. For many years, when the illusion of thirst has been upon me, this water has banished it. The water is good.

He goes out slowly Right, clicking his rosary.

MACLAREN. He's a rum old chap.

FARAKER. [*Taking the thermometer from his mouth*] Humph ! I don't believe he knows anything about it.

He goes to the shrine and examines the thermometer in the light of one of the little lamps.

MRS F. It's almost uncanny the way the Lama and that young novice go on with their praying and bell ringing, as if—as if—well, as if we mightn't all be sent to kingdom come at any minute.

MACLAREN. There's no danger of that, Mrs Faraker.

MRS F. Isn't there ?

FARAKER. [*Staring at the thermometer*] I'm normal.

RUTH. You sound disappointed, George.

FARAKER. No, no, no, but I was convinced I had a temperature. I meant to take quinine . . . now I can't. [*He chucks the water on the floor and comes over to them*] You know, I'm not sure I trust the Lama. He appears a very cultured person, but I believe he's sly, sly.

MACLAREN. He's streets above any Lama I've come across.

RUTH. He's as simple as a child.

FARAKER. Well, I can't get information out of him . . . he evades me when I question him about the monks and their habits——

MRS F. Dislikes being interviewed, probably.

FARAKER. Then about his journey to England . . . couldn't get a straight answer.

RUTH. He told me about that. I've talked with him often. Some twenty years ago, he went to Ceylon—just think of it, travelling on foot the whole way through India; he spent several years studying Pali in a monastery there. Then, an English Colonel . . . Richardson, I think his name was . . . who was a Buddhist, became great friends with him, and persuaded him to come to England. He was nearly two years there.

MRS F. What did he think of England?

RUTH. He's too polite to say. [*Smiling*] But I gather he thinks it hopeless . . . sunk in illusion.

FARAKER. Tsch! tsch! tsch! What nonsense!

MRS F. [*Holding out her cigarette, half smoked*] I can't finish it—throw it away for me, please. I'm afraid I'm not as strong as I thought.

MACLAREN. [*Taking the cigarette*] It'll be a day or two before you're quite fit. Stick to the quinine, Mrs Faraker.

He goes to the entrance, but instead of throwing the cigarette away, he puts it out and then quietly, with his back to them, puts it in his case.

FARAKER. Most annoying . . . you know I've lost all the notes I took at the other monasteries. They were in the baggage we lost in the rush up here.

MRS F. [*Shutting her eyes*] Oh, that dreadful night . . . don't talk about it, please.

FARAKER. No, dear, I'm talking of the notes . . . my notes.

Two or three distant shots ring out, then half a dozen close together, then ten or twelve more. MRS FARAKER *starts, then holds her fingers to her ears.* MACLAREN *goes to the side of the opening and peers out. The other two listen intently.*

MRS F. [*Half laughing, half hysterically*] Oh, I *do* wish they wouldn't do that.

FARAKER. [*Looking worried, to himself*] I know I was right . . . I know I was right.

RUTH. [*Rising quietly and going to the entrance*] Is it anything . . . what?

MACLAREN. [*Comes down, shaking his head*] It's all right. They always have a final blaze about sunset —just to show they're still there . . . it amuses them. I must be getting down now. Good-night, Mrs Faraker, if I don't see you again.

MRS F. Good-night.

RUTH. Good-night.

He goes out Right.

The light from outside is now the deep red afterglow of sunset.

MRS F. [*After a pause*] I hope they're not going to shoot any more. It's horrible . . . I keep listening for it.

RUTH. [*Sitting beside her and putting an arm round her*] You mustn't let yourself worry, dear, everything will come right . . . it's sure to.

A little Bhutia COOLIE BOY *comes on Right front carrying on his back two thick bamboos as long as himself, fastened together and full*

of water, and balanced by a strap across his forehead. He is followed by DAVID *Faraker's bearer, a Christian native, who is carrying a tumbler on the lid of a biscuit tin.*

DAVID. [*Driving the* COOLIE] Ai. Yai, yai! Hai!

RUTH. Here's my bath water. Isn't he a funny little fellow?

The BOY *crosses into the room Left, touching his forehead with his hands.*

What have you got there, David?

DAVID. Very nice tea for memsahib—tip-top. Piping hot.

MRS FARAKER *takes a sip, then makes a face.*

MRS F. No; I can't get used to the brick tea.

RUTH. Do try . . . it's most sustaining.

FARAKER. [*Who is seated on the Lama's divan, making notes*] Capital stuff . . . meat and drink.

MRS F. [*After another sip*] Tastes exactly like dirt. [*Puts it on tray*] Take it away.

RUTH. I like your silver salver, Louise.

MRS F. A very clever idea, David.

DAVID. I think it. [*Holding up the lid*] Only imitations, only beastly biscuit box.

He crosses Right and goes out. A gust of wind sweeps down the corridor, making the lamp flame flutter. MRS FARAKER *rises.*

MRS F. George, I think I'll go back to my room. It's too cold here.

FARAKER. [*Coming down*] Very well, dear, very well.

MRS F. [*To* RUTH] Good-night, dear.

RUTH. [*Kissing her*] Good-night. I should go to bed and try and get a long sleep.

MRS FARAKER nods, smiling, then taking her husband's arm, they go off Right, front. RUTH sits on the divan and resumes the mending of her skirt. The COOLIE BOY *with the bamboos comes out of the room Left.*

RUTH. Kai hai, little boy.

She takes a lump of sugar from her pocket and gives it to him. The BOY *salaams, pops it into his mouth and holds out his hand for more.*

[*Laughing*] No, no more to-night, half rations. Bus jao.

The BOY *salaams and scuttles off Right. RUTH resumes her mending. YEULLAT comes on Right, in the corridor. He stops a moment at the opening, looking out, then is about to go off Left. RUTH sits bending forward, listening to the footsteps.*

RUTH. Is that you . . . Tim?

YEULLAT. Yes. [*He comes to the entrance*] What are you doing?

RUTH. Keeping my rags together. Do you ever get any rest?

YEULLAT. Rest?

RUTH. You wander in here at moments, then you're gone. In the three days since you came I haven't seen you sit down once.

YEULLAT. [*Smiling*] I got four solid hours last night. [*Sits on the saddle*].

RUTH. I lay awake all night . . . listening.

YEULLAT. To what?

RUTH. The wind . . . and sounds I imagined. Do you think there'll be an attack to-night? [*Breaking the thread, puts away the needle*].

YEULLAT. [*Shaking his head*] Dawn's more likely . . . or a fog. They got more than they bargained for this morning. Thank God the moon will be full.

RUTH. I don't like the firing in the dark. Tim . . . what made you attempt a mad thing like coming in here to join us?

YEULLAT. It wasn't mad. Just a dash . . . with luck.

RUTH. With twelve men. "Suicide that didn't come off," Mr Maclaren called it.

YEULLAT. That's nonsense. We just crept through the nullah in the dark, got past them and climbed the rock on the east.

RUTH. [*Shutting her eyes*] It makes me giddy even to look down it.

YEULLAT. They didn't fire a shot till we were almost in. Then they couldn't see to hit us. I wish we'd an earthly chance of getting out as easily.

RUTH. It was the firing wakened me. . . . When I heard the Gurkhas cheering . . . I thought it was the relief.

YEULLAT. I wish it had been.

RUTH. I was glad it was you. It's a strange way to meet again, isn't it? [*Pause*] Tim, did you know I was here?

YEULLAT. I heard there were two memsahibs with Faraker. . . . I guessed.

RUTH. You—you've tried to avoid me . . . since you came.

YEULLAT. [*Gravely, after a pause*] Why do you say that, memsahib?

RUTH. I don't know. I've wanted to hear how you've been these two years.

YEULLAT. Pretty busy. I've turned into a real hill-man, almost. I think I know the frontier from Lhobrak to Chomolhari, and along as far as Nasia . . . well, better than most white men. It's not bad work, if you like a hard life. What have you been doing with yourself, memsahib?

RUTH. Oh, getting along. . . . I made the Farakers do a tour in Sikhim last hot weather. We just missed you at Lhachung.

YEULLAT. [*Nodding*] I heard, afterwards. I hear from Tubbs sometimes. Everything still the same down at Jagpur?

RUTH. Just the same. [*A pause*].

YEULLAT. You know Faraker deserves to be strung up for bringing you beyond Chundi. I practically told him so.

RUTH. Did you? [*She rises, and stands looking at the back*].

YEULLAT. Ignorance is no excuse. It has cost money, trouble, life, and we're not out of it yet.

RUTH. I—I'm afraid it's my fault, really. Everyone was against going on. He was wavering . . . and I persuaded him.

YEULLAT. You . . . you didn't realise——

RUTH. I never thought of anything . . . anyone . . . I wanted to go on . . . [*Intensely*] Just to go on.

She moves quietly forward and stands leaning with her hands on the parapet.

YEULLAT. The Government can thank themselves for giving him permits. We've known for months trouble was coming. At least, we knew on the frontier. But of course, Simla . . . far-off fields are green, but they're nothing to far-off officials. I sent in three reports myself——

With a crash the upper portion of the earthenware vessel on the parapet is shattered to pieces, as by a blow. RUTH *starts slightly, but does not leave the ledge.* YEULLAT *springs to his feet and turns.*

YEULLAT. Ruth ! For God's sake, come away from there ! [*He seizes her by the wrist, dragging her to the opening of the room. Staring at her*] You're not hurt ?

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No.

After a moment he releases her wrist.

What was it—a bullet ?

YEULLAT. Yes. You gave them a mark—that white thing—[*pointing to her bodice*] in the light. [*He turns away abruptly*].

RUTH. [*Watching him*] Would it have mattered ?

YEULLAT. Don't talk like that, memsahib [*Sitting on the divan*].

RUTH. No ? [*Looking at the fragments of the jar*] An empty earthen vessel . . . just a second . . . and

all questions answered. How easy! [*Coming down, she half kneels on the saddle, speaking quickly*] Tim, do you know *why* I have come up here? . . . It's to get away . . . from myself. You say life's hard here. I need that, I *need* it . . . it's the only thing to save me; hardship . . . struggle . . . risk: riding along the little slippery bridle paths, with the pony's foot slipping on the edge, and the precipice below . . . fight! Just to think that in a minute, in a second, I might be dead, and wonder how that would be different. That's peace . . . the edge of something infinite.

YEULLAT. Yes . . . I know.

RUTH. That night . . . you said we mustn't think. Tim, I tried . . . but . . . down there at home, it's no use. Everything seems so little now—a crowd chattering and worrying about little things. Voices far off . . . I don't seem *near* anyone, as if there was a deep chasm between us . . . or I was sunk in it . . . and alone. [*She goes a little way towards the entrance, looking out*]. But here, all that seems to fall away. The great, gaunt hills, the snows, and the cleansing winds that seem to sweep through one, till all the littleness is gone . . . and one is alone . . . alone . . . but oh! it's a better loneliness. [*Pause*] I feel, almost . . . that if I could pray, it might be heard . . . here. [*A slight pause*].

YEULLAT. Why—why not pray?

RUTH. [*Shaking her head slowly*] I wasn't brought up . . . that way. [*A slight pause*].

YEULLAT. I was.

RUTH. Tim, are you going to spend your whole life here? [*She sits on the saddle*].

YEULLAT. If they'll let me . . . the best of it.

RUTH. When I came to the hills last year, I had a wild hope that somehow, somewhere, I should see you. This time I *meant* to see you. That's why I made them go on. I suppose that was wicked . . . but I had to go on. I shall come again, next year . . . and every year . . . it will be my pilgrimage. And even if I don't see you . . . you will be near. There will be only mountains between us . . . and they won't matter.

YEULLAT. Is that going to make it easier, memsahib?

RUTH. Yes . . . for me. Something to drag me through the rest of the year. I musn't grumble . . . but if you knew what it's like, Tim . . . sometimes when I have a very bad time, I write you . . . long letters. But I never send them. . . . And all the time Jack never dreams, he's kind and gentle . . . and I think that's the worst. [*She sits with her hands clenched and her head hung. He rises and comes and stands above, without speaking. After a moment she looks up.*] How long is it going to be like this?

YEULLAT. Ruth, things have been made hard for us somehow. I don't know why . . . I don't pretend to understand. But we've got to go on . . . we've got to do the right thing, and in time . . . it will be better.

RUTH. Yes. I say that to myself, it will be better . . . some day.

The GURKHA HAVILDAR *enters and salutes.*

YEULLAT. Kya hai?

HAVILDAR. Huzoor, chey admee chotee pooroo tangi see attay hin, bundook choroon ya unko nuzdeek anideyna.

YEULLAT. Main au-unga.

The HAVILDAR *goes out.* YEULLAT *turns to* RUTH. I must go. If you hear firing, it's nothing—a few Khams trying to find a way up on the east. Don't be alarmed.

RUTH. No.

YEULLAT. And . . . don't imagine things . . . to-night will be quiet.

RUTH. I'll try. Good-night, Tim.

YEULLAT. Good-night, memsahib.

He goes out Right.

RUTH *remains sitting on the saddle, staring before her. The last sunset rays have disappeared and been followed by dusk, which changes gradually to moonlight. The* LAMA *comes on from Right lower entrance. He carries a small vessel and a handful of wild flowers, and murmuring to himself over and over again in a low, monotonous drawl "Om mane padme hum," goes to the altar before the Buddha, stands for some moments with bent head, then strews the flowers at the foot of the image.* RUTH *looks up, watching him, then after a little comes quietly to the right of the entrance, and leaning against the pillar, watches him intently. The* LAMA *fills a couple of*

the lamps, which have gone out, with butter from the vessel he carries and lights them from another lamp. Then he takes some grains of incense from a copper vessel and sprinkles them on the centre lamp.

LAMA. Sarva d'armen paritjugja mamekam saranam vraga. . . . [*The rest is inaudible*].

A long column of incense smoke rises in front of the Buddha. The LAMA *bends, laying his forehead on the altar ledge, and remains motionless for some seconds. Then he turns and goes slowly towards the exit Left, clicking his beads.* RUTH *watches him pass her, then speaks.*

RUTH. Where did the flowers come from?

The LAMA *turns and looks up very slowly, like one coming back from distant thoughts.*

LAMA. A cleft in the rock, near the gateway—it is full of these little flame-bundles.

RUTH. I thought nothing grew on this rock. . . . Did you make the garden?

LAMA. [*Smiling, and shaking his head*] The wheel goes on. Nothing is barren—at the appointed hour the rock brings forth. [*He nods several times*] Yes . . . yes . . . the soil was borne by the years, and the south winds carried the seeds, and when the sun and the rains had been gentle, lo! even in the dark hour, there is a garland for Amitábha—for "The Boundless Light." [*He bows towards the altar*].

RUTH. Why did the monks leave you alone here?

LAMA. I am not alone. There is my Getsul—he

whom I teach. [*Nodding*] A diligent seeker after truth, earnest, he follows the Way.

RUTH. Where have the other monks gone?

LAMA. The illusion of fear made them blind. They fled. . . . To Tashi-Gompa some . . . others, I know not. Fear . . . care for the worthless body! They took with them all the food! I and my Getsul must eat the sahibs' bread; but indeed the sahibs heap up virtue thereby——

The report of a rifle interrupts him. It is loud and near, being fired from the lower storey. RUTH *goes up a little way and stands, strained and listening.*

A pause, then three more shots in quick succession from below. A moment's pause, followed by a regular fusillade of distant shots from the enemy. Then silence, only broken by the clicking of the LAMA'S *beads.* RUTH *comes down and sits on the pony saddle.*

The madness of killing! They will be born again! Again and again! They are binding themselves to the wheel . . . fast . . . fast . . . to the nethermost part of the wheel.

The wind rises moaning, making the lamp flame flicker.

RUTH. That is the wheel . . . there?

She points to the great painting of the wheel on the back wall to the left of the lamp.

LAMA. [*Nodding slowly*] The Wheel of Existence . . . that is the wheel. [*He comes up below the*

lamp and stands pointing up] Above the heavens . . . there the celestial ones . . . mankind here . . . beneath the realm of ghosts . . . that way the animals . . . and below all the hells, eight hells of fire, eight hells of ice and snow. [*He waves his arm slowly in a circle and his voice fills as though inspired*] All therein is illusion . . . we are born in it, and re-born, birth after birth, ascending and descending, chained to illusion, bound . . . bound . . . [*His voice falls slowly*] . . . till desire be dead in us . . . till we be free . . . free from the wheel.

RUTH. [*To herself*] Till desire be dead! [*Then to the* LAMA] Then the wheel is suffering?

The lamp flame flutters in the wind.

LAMA. The wheel is life, and life is suffering. Because of ignorance, because of illusion, because we cheat ourselves with the shadow of what seems. We must follow the Middle Way, the path of the most excellent Law. Then, in this stream of change that is the world, the Blessings come:

Not to serve the foolish, but the wise.
To honour the worthy of honour.
Right desires in the heart, right thoughts in the mind.
To give alms, to help kindred, to do no hurt to anything that lives.
Not to be weary in well-doing.
To cease from sin.

You must cut off self-love, even as an autumn lotus with the hand.

RUTH. [*After a pause*] Is love illusion?

LAMA. The last . . . the last illusion.

RUTH. [*Rising, speaking in a low, tense voice*] It isn't true . . . it isn't true. Love is real . . . all the rest may be illusion. Life . . . death . . . suffering: when love comes, what do they matter? Everything in the world may fall away from you, but love stays . . . love stays.

LAMA. [*Going towards the opening at the back*] Look, sahiba! [*He points up to the sky*].

RUTH *comes over and stands beside him, looking up.*

Do you see the face of the hare . . . the hare in the moon?

RUTH. It is a man . . . the man in the moon.

LAMA. [*Shaking his head*] No . . . no . . . it is the hare. Once in a former birth, the Buddha was born in the shape of a hare. And one day, seeing in a wood a poor hungry man sitting by a fire of brambles, this hare was sorrowful, saying: "The man is hungry; he cannot eat my food, which is grass. I have nothing to give him, nothing but myself." And he leaped on the flames that the man might eat of his body. Then the god Kalpa, seeing this, split open a mountain, and taking the sap thereof, painted on the moon the face of the hare, to be a sign for ever . . . of love where self is not.

She looks at him for a moment, then smiling gently, she shakes her head and turns away.

RUTH. You do not understand.

She comes slowly and sits on the divan.

LAMA. [*To himself, staring at the moon*] A man!

[*He shakes his head*] There be the staring eyes . . . the little round mouth . . . the long teeth likewise. No, no . . . it is *obviously* a hare.

A strong gust of wind blows the lamp flame sideways, making it flutter and grow dim.

[*Staring at the lamp*] Life is a lamp flame in the wind. The world's winds trouble it. It is blown out and re-lighted, and again, and again, till the food of the flame, till desire be burnt away. None may re-light it then . . . the flame is gone . . . Nirvana . . . eternal stillness . . . peace. [*He stands motionless, staring before him, lapsing into reverie*].

RUTH. [*To herself*] Peace !

FARAKER *comes on Right. He is half dressed. He looks at the* LAMA, *then crosses over to* RUTH.

FARAKER. Louise keeps worrying to know what that firing was . . . won't try to sleep. . . . I said I'd try and find out——

RUTH. There's no danger. Some of the Khams were trying to scale the path on the east. Captain Yeullat was here . . . he told me . . . we're not to worry.

FARAKER. That's what I kept saying . . . what I kept saying . . . but she will imagine things.

RUTH. She's run down . . . and then the strain——

FARAKER. Yes, yes. Of course.

RUTH. [*Rising*] Shall I go to her ?

FARAKER. No, no, no. I'll tell her. She'll be all right. It's just nerves . . . nerves.

RUTH. I'm wondering how long my nerves will last.

I think I'll try and get some sleep now. Captain Yeullat says there may be firing—another attack—about dawn.

FARAKER. Beastly—beastly! Well, I hope you'll sleep.

RUTH. [*Going to door Left*] Thanks, and tell Louise things are all right. Good night.

FARAKER. Yes, yes. Good night.

RUTH *goes out and closes the door.*

FARAKER *turns and looks at the* LAMA *for a moment.*

Er . . . Lama.

The LAMA *does not move.* FARAKER *goes up to him.*

Er . . . Lama.

LAMA. [*In the far-away voice of one coming out of a dream*] The water is good . . . it is good.

FARAKER. Yes, yes, quite so, quite so. [*Taking note-book and pencil from his pocket*] Now, tell me . . . there was one little point I forgot to put to you yesterday. With regard to the vow of celibacy . . . do you find—among the younger monks, of course—that there are . . . er . . . occasions when this vow is . . . er . . . when there are lapses in that direction?

LAMA. [*After a pause*] Sahib, thus it was said by the Blessed One: "The wise man seeketh not the sin in others, but in himself."

He goes slowly to the low divan in the corner, where he sits and becomes lost in contemplation. FARAKER *watches him, then going*

to the lamp, begins turning over the pages of his note-book. YEULLAT *comes from the corridor.*

FARAKER. [*Looking up*] Oh, Yeullat . . . that firing just now—nothing serious . . . eh?

YEULLAT. [*Quietly*] No . . . not this time. Some of them trying to get up the cliff . . . that lot won't trouble us again, anyway.

The GETSUL *comes on hurriedly. He glances at the* ENGLISHMEN, *then goes to the* LAMA, *speaking in low, excited tones.* YEULLAT *and* FARAKER *stand watching. They speak rapidly in the Bhutani dialect.*

GETSUL. Guroola Shik—ya Dhik—yo.

The LAMA *looks up.*

LAMA. Kara yo? [*He rises*].

They continue talking almost inaudibly.

FARAKER. What are they saying . . . what are they talking about?

YEULLAT. I don't know. I don't understand Bhutani. [*Watching them*] Something must have happened . . . they don't get excited, as a rule——

FARAKER. [*Turning away*] Now, tell me, in your view . . . we've a right to know the facts, we ought to face them . . . what is the truth about our situation?

YEULLAT. [*After a pause, still watching*] We can hold out, till we're relieved.

FARAKER. Till we're relieved. Do you mean——

MACLAREN *comes on quickly Right. Outside, the voices and footsteps of a number of men*

following him down the corridor can be heard. A few moments later the GELONG, *a sturdy monk, less Mongolian in type and about thirty years of age, is brought on by a couple of Gurkhas, preceded by the* HAVILDAR *and* NATIVE OFFICER.

MACLAREN. [*As he enters*] Yeullat . . . Yeullat, there's a monk just come in ; I believe he must be one of the fellows who ran away. He hailed the sentries from the platform ; we might have shot him, only the young one was down there, and began to jabber and make signs that he knew him. We can't make out a word he says . . . it's this mongrel Tibetan.

YEULLAT. The Lama 'll be able to tell us.

MACLAREN. Yes, they seem pretty excited about something.

GELONG. [*Crying out*] Tsering Lama, cha-pe nang-chung.

LAMA. Lap-gyu ka-re yo ?

GELONG. Chi-ling mami ki sang-gyu chik yo.

YEULLAT. Tsering lama, who is this man . . . is he one of your monks ?

LAMA. He is a monk of this monastery, sahib ; he is called Tundup Shedar. He has walked from Domgit Dzong, a long way. He says he brings news of the army of the sahibs.

YEULLAT. The relief force, yes . . . what does he say ?

LAMA. Ma-di ka-tu chung ?

GELONG. Te-ring sho-ke chung. Chi-ling ma-mi pam-ne che-ka po chim-pare.

RUTH *appears at the door Left, wrapped in a light kimono, with her long hair loosely knotted up. She stands listening, unseen by* FARAKER, MACLAREN *and* YEULLAT, *who have their backs to her. When the* GELONG *finishes, the* LAMA *looks at* YEULLAT, *then back again at the* GELONG, *in silence.*

YEULLAT. Well?

LAMA. Sahib, it is bad news that he bears.

YEULLAT. What does he say?

LAMA. He says to-day, before dawn, a great fight was fought between the Khams and the army of the sahibs. He says the sahibs lost many men, many, more than half the army. He says that those that remain living are gone back.

A pause; for a moment no one moves. Then MACLAREN *bends forward to* YEULLAT.

MACLAREN. [*Very quietly*] This may be bluff . . . they've sent him in, perhaps——

YEULLAT. [*Nodding*] Yes, it's an old trick.

FARAKER. [*Touching* YEULLAT'S *arm*] Do you think——

YEULLAT. Wait! [*To the* LAMA] How long have you known this monk? Can you vouch for his word?

LAMA. I have known him ten years. I have not known him speak the thing that is not. He is a man of good will.

A slight pause.

YEULLAT. Did he *see* the fighting?

LAMA. Sahib, he says so.

YEULLAT. What was he doing there?

LAMA. He was brought by a shepherd to a chief of the Khams, who is sick.

YEULLAT. There were guns with the sahibs, big guns. . . . Can he tell what became of them?

LAMA. Cha-ling-la me-kyo yo-wa-re, te-le-ka-re chung?

GELONG. Nga gyu mo.

LAMA. He does not know.

MACLAREN. [*Quietly*] *We* shall know . . . later on.

YEULLAT. Where . . . where was the fighting? Can he tell us the place . . . the exact place?

LAMA. Ma-di ka-pa chung?

GELONG. Par-chu dram-la, trang yo-sa-la ma gyap-song.

LAMA. In the valley of the Par Chu, above Langano. In the narrow part where the road runs close by the river. [*A pause.*

MACLAREN. You know the place . . . road between cliff and the river?

YEULLAT. [*Nodding*] Right bank covered with rhododendron, at the foot of steep hill. I know it.

MACLAREN. They never went in there, without thorough scouting.

YEULLAT. [*After a pause*] Ask him *where* the Khams were posted in the fight?

LAMA. Ma-yo-tu Kham-pa te ka-pa yo?

GELONG. Chu-dram-la ta-ma-shing-ki shing-na kyi-la sang-ne de-pa-re.

A pause. MACLAREN *and* YEULLAT *look at*

each other in silence. FARAKER *looks from one to the other anxiously.*

FARAKER. [*In a low tone*] Er . . . in your view . . . what do you make of it?

YEULLAT. Tsering lama, how has this monk come through the enemy? What reason had he to bring us this news?

LAMA. He has told me, sahib, already. He prayed the chief, whom he healed, that I and my Getsul might be saved. If we pass out with him they will not harm us.

YEULLAT. [*After a pause*] Do you wish to go out?

LAMA. [*Smiling, and shaking his head*] Sahib, I have seen many lands and great seas, and over all illusion, blinding the soul. I am old . . . I will stay . . . till perhaps I be freed from the wheel.

YEULLAT. [*After a pause*] The monk must remain here for the present. To-morrow we will see. [*To the soldiers*] Gelong ko gompa se mut janey doe . . . ruksut hi.

The HAVILDAR, OFFICER, *and* TROOPERS *go out Right with the* GELONG.

RUTH *goes noiselessly into her room, leaving the door ajar.*

Tsering lama, thank you for interpreting . . . this news.

The LAMA *inclines his head and goes slowly out Left, clicking his beads.*

A pause.

MACLAREN. What do you think? Think it's true?

YEULLAT. [*After a pause*] Do you?

He begins to walk slowly Right, looking at the ground. FARAKER *watches first one, then the other.*

FARAKER. If it is . . . of course . . . tell me, what will it mean exactly?

YEULLAT. [*Turning*] Look here, Faraker, we're in a tight place, there's no good pretending we're not. We don't know yet if it's true . . . we don't know what'll happen. There's only one thing . . . the women mustn't know. Do you understand? For God's sake, not a syllable to your wife . . . or Mrs Dangan . . . anyway, not yet.

FARAKER. Yes . . . I understand . . . quite, quite.

A pause.

Of course, if the worst comes to the worst, we can try and cut our way through . . . isn't that so . . .? [*Then turning to* MACLAREN] Isn't that so?

YEULLAT. [*Late*] Yes . . . yes, yes, of course.

DAVID *enters Right, front.*

DAVID. The memsahib call me. She is ve-ry anxious. Will the sahib be so ve-ry kind and come to her?

FARAKER. [*Starting up*] Oh, yes . . . tell the memsahib I'm coming.

DAVID *goes out.* FARAKER *crosses Right in dazed way.*

Yes . . . yes . . . I must go to my wife . . . I must go to my wife. [*He turns*] Yeullat, I think I . . . I caused you some annoyance a little while ago . . .

I possibly appeared interfering, and so . . . I should like to apologise.

YEULLAT. My dear Faraker, that's all right. . . . I understand.

FARAKER. Thank you. Yes . . . yes . . . I must go to my wife.

He goes out Right. MACLAREN *sits on the saddle, leaning his chin on his fists and staring hard at the floor.*

YEULLAT *stands looking after* FARAKER. *For a moment, silence.*

MACLAREN. This means . . . all U.P. . . . what? [*Pause*].

YEULLAT. We've only got a half ration . . . and something less than two rounds per man. I should think . . . by to-morrow night . . . it'll be all over. [*Pause*].

MACLAREN. The women . . . if only we hadn't the women . . . we could go out for it . . . a thundering fight, and finish it that way.

YEULLAT. There's no going out . . . now.

He turns away and stands looking out at the back.

MACLAREN. Suppose that fellow was lying . . . but why should he be?

YEULLAT. No . . . the rhododendron thicket . . . along the river.

MACLAREN. [*Nodding*] I know.

YEULLAT. When he said that . . . I could see it happening. The old story . . . bad scouting.

MACLAREN. Went over the hills . . . and left the

rest to Providence . . . ha! Providence. [*Pause*] Poor devils! I wonder what regiment——

YEULLAT. Doesn't sound like Gurkhas.

MACLAREN. My God, no! [*He takes a cigarette from his case*] It's a funny thing . . . I'm going home in September . . . been saving up for five years. [*He strikes a match, lights his cigarette and blows out a cloud of smoke*] Needn't save these, anyway. [*He rises*] I'd better get down and see to the sentries. I wonder what they think . . . [*pointing out Right*].

YEULLAT. *They* know.

MACLAREN. Um! They can *smell* news like this. Better try and get a sleep before you relieve me.

YEULLAT. Sleep! [*He turns with a faint smile*] My dear Mac, I should think we'll get all the sleep we want . . . presently.

MACLAREN. [*Nodding*] Yes . . . that's about the size of it.

He goes out Right.

YEULLAT *goes to the parapet, and leaning against the side of the opening, stares out at the night. A moment afterwards* RUTH *comes softly from her room. She steals over to the lamp and stands watching him in silence. Then she calls softly.*

RUTH. Tim.

YEULLAT *turns and comes down.*

YEULLAT. Why aren't you asleep?

RUTH. Tim, what's going to happen to us? I want to know . . . I want to know.

YEULLAT. [*Quickly*] What do you mean?

RUTH. I was there . . . at the door . . . I heard.

YEULLAT. It isn't true, memsahib . . . we can't know yet——

RUTH. When George went . . . you were speaking the whole truth then . . . "to-morrow night it will be over."

YEULLAT. I was wrong; there's hope . . . there's always hope.

RUTH. Tim, I *know*, and I'm not afraid. . . . This is the end . . . the end of everything? [*He is silent. She goes nearer to him*] You want to fight, to go on hoping, because you're a man . . . you're brave. There's neither hope nor fight in me. I'm just waiting——

YEULLAT. Memsahib, I . . . I . . . [*Clenching his teeth*] If there were something to be *done*! But to think of *you* here, in this awful . . . to be trapped . . . to know I can do nothing . . . nothing but wait . . . wait.

He sinks on the right of the divan, his hands clenched and his head bent. RUTH *comes and stands beside him.*

RUTH. If you were here alone, and by any miracle I could get here, I would come. If I could go away alone, if any miracle could save me, I would stay. . . . Tim, I'm not afraid of death. . . . I'm afraid of nothing in the world, but losing you.

YEULLAT. [*Looking up at her*] Ruth!

RUTH. [*Sitting beside him*] Yes, all the time you were away, I would have been glad of death, only for one thing . . . leaving you behind. Tim, in those

two years . . . you can tell me now . . . how often did you think of me . . . how long did you miss me?

YEULLAT. You were never out of my thoughts; there wasn't a day when I didn't long for you.

RUTH. You wouldn't tell me when I asked you, before. But I knew. When two people love as we do, words don't matter. Some kind of light tells us everything. If darkness came to either, we should know . . . without a word.

YEULLAT. I could feel all the time that you loved me.

RUTH. And I knew that you longed for me. Often, at home, when I could be alone, I used to sit for hours with my eyes shut, and the longing in you would sweep over me . . . out of the distance . . . like waves . . . till I was carried away . . . away . . . as the body of a drowned one is swayed in the sea. Going away couldn't change things, could it, Tim?

YEULLAT. No.

The lamp flame bends and flutters in the wind that sweeps down the corridor with low, long-drawn sound. RUTH *sits watching the flame till it burns straight again.*

RUTH. Tim.

YEULLAT. Yes.

RUTH. Tell me . . . what will it be like?

YEULLAT. What?

RUTH. The end.

YEULLAT. Don't . . . don't ask that.

RUTH. Why not? We're not afraid of death, we're not like living people . . . they won't think of

it because they don't know the hour . . . it's a terror hidden in the dark. But we've passed that. We know. It's there . . . out there . . . waiting. It may come at dawn, or in the day, or at evening . . . but to-morrow . . . to-morrow . . . it's close . . . so close that we—we could touch it. Tim . . . I want to know . . . how will it be . . . in a fight, it will come in a fight?

YEULLAT. Yes.

RUTH. Where?

YEULLAT. Below.

RUTH. By the gates?

YEULLAT. Yes . . . they'll rush us . . . from the platform——

RUTH. A long fight?

YEULLAT. [*Shakes his head*] We may stop the first rush . . . but when the last shot——

RUTH. Yes?

YEULLAT. They'll come again . . . all over us . . . bayonet work . . . scrimmage . . . all——

[*He stops.*

RUTH. I shall be there . . . near . . . near you . . . as near as you'll let me come. [*A pause*].

YEULLAT. Ruth . . . when it comes . . . you know . . . [*He touches the revolver case on his belt*] This is for you.

RUTH. I know . . . and for her? [*With a gesture*].

YEULLAT. Faraker's got one. . . . I'll tell him . . . when it's time.

RUTH. [*Holding out her hand*] Give it to me . . . for a second . . . so that it mayn't seem strange.

He takes out the revolver and puts it in her hand.

RUTH. [*Staring at it*] It's loaded? [*He nods*].

She raises her hand and holds the muzzle pressed against her temple.

YEULLAT. Don't!

RUTH. It won't hurt . . . just the touch of a cold finger that means . . . now.

He bends her arm down, then takes the pistol from her and puts it back in the case.

RUTH. It doesn't frighten me, Tim . . . it's a good end. . . . No hope . . . no thought of living . . . only a wild fight for death. [*Rising*] I shall be quite near . . . behind you . . . close . . . waiting. I know how it will be . . . quick . . . quick . . . a crowd, a sea of killing, rage, madness, blood . . . blood . . . and you'll fall into my arms . . . into my arms. Then a second . . . we shall be one . . . in the end we shall be one. [*Clasping her hands*] Oh! . . . it's a good end . . . a good end.

She goes up to the centre opening and stands looking out over the hills. Again the wind moans and the lamp flame flutters.

RUTH. Tim, isn't it strange? I can hardly feel the ground under my feet.

YEULLAT *rises and comes over to her.*

YEULLAT. Go and lie down, dear. You'll need your strength.

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No. Look at the moon. [*Pause*] To-morrow night . . . where shall we be? [*A pause*] You called me "dear" then . . . did you know?

YEULLAT. I always call you that . . . to myself.

She turns towards him, touching his arm lightly, and stands staring at the image of the Buddha.

RUTH. What a little thing life is. That Buddha was there before we were born . . . it will be there when we're gone.

He turns and looks at the image for a moment in silence.

YEULLAT. It will go . . . some day.

RUTH. Yes; only the still smile of it seems eternal. Like love. Life goes, but not the smile on its lips. [*She comes down a little*] To-morrow . . . I feel as if to-morrow had taken us both . . . already. Everything seems miles, years away . . . illusion . . . everything but love. [*Suddenly turning to him*] Tim, tell me you love me . . . say it! [*Putting out her hands*] I want to hear . . . I want to hear.

YEULLAT. [*Taking her hands*] I love you, I love you. . . . Oh, my dear . . . my dear! . . .

RUTH. I love you.

Her body sways blindly towards him. He kisses her passionately on the lips, then letting go her hands, folds his arms round her.

RUTH. [*With her head on his breast*] There's nothing to come between us now . . . people and things, the world that kept us apart . . . they're gone . . . all the illusions. This is our own world.

YEULLAT. I love you . . . I love you . . .

RUTH. A little world . . . all . . . all our own.

She nestles closer to him, closing her eyes. The

lamp flame flutters in the wind. The cry of a night bird is heard below among the rocks, "Kiou . . . kiou," two mournful calls, with a short interval. RUTH *starts slightly, staring in front of her.*

RUTH. Tim, what was that?

He listens. Again the "kiou . . . kiou" is heard a little further off.

YEULLAT. It's a kind of little grey owl.

She moves a little way from him, listening.

RUTH. It sounded like someone calling . . . [*Again the "kiou . . . kiou" is heard, but far away*] calling us away. Where? To what? [*She shivers and sinks on the left corner of the divan*] Kiss me.

He kneels beside her with one knee on the divan, and taking her in his arms, kisses her.

YEULLAT. I love you. I love your mouth and your eyes and all *you* . . . body and soul.

RUTH. Kiss my eyes . . . [*He kisses her eyes*] and my hair. [*She throws back her head, and her loosely bound hair falls about her. He takes a cluster in his hand*]. [*Passionately*] My hair will cover you. I will spread all of it over your face, at the last, and go out with you.

A fierce gust of wind makes the lamp splutter and almost go out. With a sudden cry she rises.

No! . . . I want life. . . . We can't die! I want to live, to love you . . . to love you. [*Turning, she holds out her arms to him*].

YEULLAT. [*Passionately*] Ruth!

RUTH. [*In his arms, wildly*] Stay with me . . . what does anything matter now? This is our world . . . all that is left of it, and I'm yours . . . all . . . all . . . for I love you . . . I love you. . . .

YEULLAT. I love you!

Locked in each other's arms their lips meet. The lamp flame is whirled in a wild gust of wind, then suddenly blown out. In the darkness

The CURTAIN *falls.*

ACT III

THIRD ACT

SCENE: *The same. Dawn is just beginning to break—the swift dawn of the Himalayas. The darkness turns grey, then changes rapidly to violet, outlining the distant hills. The* GETSUL *enters Left from the corridor, sleepily swinging his prayer wheel. He goes to the altar, trims several of the lamps, and re-lights a couple which have gone out. As he turns he sees that the big lamp Left is out, takes a light from the altar and re-lights it. Then he goes off through the corridor, Right. A moment or two later the* GELONG *crosses from Left to Right in the corridor, murmuring the "Om mane padme hum" on his rosary. Another slight interval and the* LAMA *follows in the same direction. An interval of silence. The dawn is gaining, the violet changing to green, and later on to pink. Suddenly a wild yell (the Gurkha war-cry) is heard from above outside. It is the sentry on the roof calling out.*

VOICE. [*From above*] Huzoor! Huzoor! [*Pause* Huzoor!

A slight pause, then a voice from the corridor off Right answers.

VOICE. [*Below*] Kya hooah?

VOICE. [*Above*] Maclaren Sahib, Ko juldee balao.

A moment later a GURKHA RIFLEMAN *runs*

across from Right to Left. Then in a few moments he returns with MACLAREN, *who is buckling on his belt, etc.* MACLAREN *leans over the parapet and calls up.*

MACLAREN. Oother kya hooah?

VOICE. Huzoor, deccan ke turuf takree per ek bowtee main dek sukta hoon, bowtee per teen koney hain.

MACLAREN *stands looking out for a moment, then pulls out his field-glasses and looks through them.*

MACLAREN. [*After a pause*] Main nahin dek sukta: Kahan hai?

VOICE. [*Above*] Teesera koney ke puchum teruf. [*A pause*].

MACLAREN. [*Suddenly*] My God, yes! [*He stares intently through the glasses for an instant, then shouts wildly*] Yeullat! Yeullat! Yeullat! [*To the* GURKHA Dowro, huzoor ko balao?

The GURKHA *runs off Right. Then he is heard shouting, and voices answer him from below. He shouts down again, and again the answering shouts are heard from below, in a gradually increasing hubbub of excitement.* MACLAREN *stands looking through his glasses.*

MACLAREN. [*Shouting off Right*] Yeullat! Yeullat, man! The relief! The relief's in sight! Their advanced guard is flag-wagging about two miles away.

YEULLAT *hurries on Right.*

YEULLAT. Where is it? [*Taking out his field-glasses*] How can you see in this light?

MACLAREN. Yes, yes . . . over there! [*Pointing*] That hill with the three humps, near the river. Four fingers west of the end hump.

YEULLAT. Yes, I see it . . . I see it now. Thank God, that's all right . . . that's all right.

MACLAREN. [*Laughing excitedly*] All right! I shall do a Highland fling in a minute.

YEULLAT. Quick, get your signallers up to the roof.

MACLAREN. [*Shouting off Right*] Signal wallah ko bolo! Gompa ke ooper jao.

VOICE [*Repeating off*] Signal wallah ko bolo! Gompa ke ooper jao.

Voices are heard shouting the order down below.

YEULLAT. You'd better take it down; they're repeating.

MACLAREN *takes out note book and pencil.* YEULLAT *reads the signals through his glasses, repeating them aloud.* MACLAREN *repeats them after him, writing them down.*

Repeating. That's all.

MACLAREN. [*Reading from book*] "Are you all right? Relief force five hundred infantry, mountain battery, Stapleton command. Help locate enemy."

YEULLAT. Signal them "All well. Believe enemy retired during night; probably going north."

MACLAREN. [*Looking up quickly*] Retired! How do you know that?

YEULLAT. I sent out scouts an hour ago. They got as far as the east wood without drawing fire.

Four GURKHAS *have come on Right, one carrying signalling flags, another a heliograph.*

MACLAREN. [*To the men*] Ke ooper jao.

They salute and go off Left quickly.

MACLAREN. By Jove! Looks as if we're not even going to get a fight out of this. [*As he is going*] I say, old man, bit of a change from last night. What?

YEULLAT. [*Putting up his field-glasses*] Yes . . . it's a change.

MACLAREN *laughs and turns off Left.* YEULLAT *stands for a moment quite still, then goes to* RUTH'S *door Left.*

[*Calling*] Ruth! . . . Ruth! [*He moves away*].

RUTH *comes quickly from the room.*

RUTH. I'm ready, Tim . . . I'm ready!

YEULLAT. Ruth dear, it's the relief force . . . they're signalling a few miles off.

RUTH. [*Staring at him wildly*] What do you mean? . . . They've attacked . . . you've come for me, you said you'd come. . . . I'm ready, Tim.

YEULLAT. [*Taking her hands*] Dear, dear, no! Our people are coming up the valley . . . it's the relief.

She draws away from him, pressing her hands to her forehead.

RUTH. There was a cry . . . horrible . . . it woke me . . . then shouting. I . . . I . . . [*For a moment she stands motionless, staring in front of her. She hides her face in her hands*].

YEULLAT. Ruth, don't . . . dear, dear, don't cry.

RUTH. [*Shaking her head and looking up*] I just don't seem to have strength for this. . . . I can't see . . . I can't see!

YEULLAT. We must think . . . we must think what's to be done.

RUTH. It was all settled . . . now there's nothing. When I awoke then, it was dark. . . . I was trembling; but I wasn't afraid. . . . I just wanted you . . . to take your hand, and go out with you . . . [*Clinging to him*] Tim, I'm afraid now. . . . I'm afraid of life. Is there nowhere in the world where we can get away from all?

YEULLAT. Yes . . . we must go . . . somewhere. We can't go on as we were . . . not now.

RUTH. You love me . . . tell me you love me.

YEULLAT. You know I love you. [*He kisses her*].

RUTH. I want you . . . nothing but you. We belong to each other . . . we've suffered for it . . . we've a right to it.

The GURKHAS *are heard cheering wildly down below. "Shaba! Shaba! Shabaaa!" The light outside has been growing fast. It is now close to sunrise.*

[*Starting*] What's that?

YEULLAT. [*Turning*] They've seen the signals.

RUTH. It's like fate . . . rushing on us . . . the old life . . . rushing, rushing so that we can't think. [*Quietly, after a slight pause*] I suppose we should be glad . . . for the others.

She stretches out her hand to silence him and stands bent forward, listening. A moment later FARAKER *comes quickly on Right front.*

FARAKER. [*Excitedly*] My bearer's just told me . . . the relief's in sight. Is it true, Yeullat; is it true?

YEULLAT. Yes, it's true, Faraker.

FARAKER. Oh, thank God, thank God! I told my wife—she's just getting up—though I was almost afraid to believe it. [*Rubbing his hands*] But that's all right . . . that's all right.

YEULLAT. We're signalling the advanced guard now. I don't think you'll have any more fighting round here. The enemy have moved off in the night.

FARAKER. You don't say so: splendid . . . splendid. [*Cheerfully*] Well, this is the end of all our troubles, eh, Ruth, eh? [*He goes into the corridor and looks out*].

RUTH. The end . . . yes.

FARAKER. We ought to be very thankful, very thankful. I'm thankful, and I'm sure we all are.

The sun has risen above the mountains. Several blasts on the brazen trumpet are heard, then the big bell of the monastery begins to toll. On one of the nearer hills the flashing of a heliograph can be seen.

FARAKER. Yes, yes! And the Lamas offering prayer to their gods, whoever they may be . . . very proper, very touching! [*To* YEULLAT] Strange how a common danger——

YEULLAT. The Lamas' prayer is for sunrise. I'm afraid we don't come into it.

FARAKER. Oh! . . . Do you know, Yeullat, I wasn't really taken in by the news that fellow brought last night.

YEULLAT. Weren't you?

FARAKER. No, no; no, no! Of course I saw you

all thought it serious. But at the back of my head, all the time I had an idea : " This fellow's lying."

YEULLAT. He wasn't lying. He probably saw some fighting, and exaggerated it.

FARAKER. No, no ; he was lying. I sized him up . . . I saw it . . . I saw it.

YEULLAT. You didn't say so.

FARAKER. Not at the time. I saw it, later on, when I was in bed. [*Looking out at the back*] What's that ? That's a heliograph working there, isn't it ?

YEULLAT. [*Looking out*] That'll be the main guard. They're closer up than I thought.

FARAKER. Well, I must tell Louise. She's had a bad night, but this news 'll do her no end of good . . . no end of good.

He is going off Right, but waits as MACLAREN *bursts on Left.*

MACLAREN. I say, Yeullat . . . [*Seeing* RUTH] Oh, Mrs Dangan, they've just helioed us. Your husband's come up with the relief force.

RUTH *rises quickly.*

He's on ahead with the advanced guard somewhere . . . . they ought to be here any minute.

RUTH. Jack . . . Jack !

MACLAREN. I just ran down to let you know.

FARAKER. I'm so glad, Ruth. This is great news. Splendid ! Splendid ! Louise 'll be delighted.

He goes off R.

MACLAREN. [*To* YEULLAT] I've signalled them : " All well, full of fight, and able to hold out for weeks."

[*He laughs boisterously*] That's a whacking lie, but I felt I just had to buck a bit. [*As he goes off*] Coming up?

YEULLAT. In a minute.

MACLAREN *hurries off Left.* YEULLAT *and* RUTH *stand staring at each other in silence.*

RUTH. This is final.

YEULLAT. [*Nodding*] Yes.

RUTH. We must decide for good now . . . for good or ill.

YEULLAT. We've got to see it through.

RUTH. I was only half awake then—I thought everything was over for us, except the easy way to the end . . . and the change stunned me . . . but I'm awake now. It's life—*life* we've got to face. [*Going to him*] Tim, are you sure that you love me enough to give up everything—for it means that—and take me away with you?

YEULLAT. I love you enough to give up anything, to go anywhere you wish, to do anything you ask . . . except . . . Ruth, he must be told . . . we can't lie to him.

RUTH. [*Taking his hands*] Don't be afraid, dear. Whatever we do, we do it openly . . . because we must. Whether it be right or wrong . . . because we must. When he comes, I shall see him. . . . You must let me see him first. . . . I shall tell him that we love each other . . . everything. I shall ask him to give me my freedom . . . so that we may be married. He will do it, I know him. Then, if he wants to speak to you . . . I will send for you.

YEULLAT. I must see him.

RUTH. Very well. Tim, what are we going to do . . . afterwards? We must think of that. After . . . after the divorce . . . you'll have to leave the service . . . isn't that so?

YEULLAT. That's so.

RUTH. Shall you mind . . . much?

YEULLAT. [*Smiling*] I shall get over it. Yes, we must think of that . . . ways and means. . . . I've got a little money. . . . I could buy a farm . . . one of the Colonies, New Zealand, perhaps——

RUTH. Yes . . . yes——

YEULLAT. I think we could be very happy . . . that way——

RUTH. [*Feverishly*] We must . . . we must be happy . . . we love each other. I shall be happy anywhere, if I have you . . . that's the only thing that matters. And if you won't regret——

YEULLAT. Regret!

RUTH. Then what does anything matter?

Shouts heard outside. YEULLAT *turns and listens.*

YEULLAT. Remember, when you've told him . . . send for me . . . [*Taking her hands*] Promise me.

RUTH. I promise—I promise.

YEULLAT. Whatever comes . . . we're above-board . . . straight. We'll see it through together.

RUTH. Together . . . I promise.

He holds her hands for a second, then goes out Left.

RUTH *walks to and fro for a moment restlessly,*

then, leaning against the column at the right of the entrance, hides her face. Then she raises her head, looking round in dazed fashion until her eyes fall on the face of the Buddha. For a moment she remains still, staring at it, then half hypnotised, moves slowly to the foot of the altar and stands looking up at the face. The LAMA *enters from the corridor Right. He comes down a little way, watching her intently, then as though drawn by his eyes she turns slowly. They stand facing each other silently for some moments.*

LAMA. Sahiba, your heart is full of sorrows.

RUTH. [*Half shrinking from him*] Why . . . why do you say that?

LAMA [*Looking into her eyes intently*] It is open . . . I am looking into it.

RUTH. You are strange . . . and your words are strange.

She moves uneasily, but cannot take her eyes from his.

LAMA. Yes . . . yes. . . I am looking into it [*A pause. He continues speaking very gently*] Listen, Sahiba. This is the noble truth of sorrow:

Life is sorrow;

To be united to the unloved is sorrow;

To be divided from the loved is sorrow;

Not to receive what one craves is sorrow.

RUTH. [*Shrinking*] Why do you say these things to me?

LAMA. I see them in your heart. . . . I am looking into it.

RUTH. [*In a low voice*] I'm miserable. . . .

LAMA. It is the craving that brings sorrow . . . the illusion of desire. Desire the sower of sorrows! Passion that burns up the fields of life.

RUTH. [*Covering her eyes with her hands*] I'm afraid! You seem to look through me . . . to know what is in my thoughts. You make me afraid.

LAMA. No . . . no . . . do not be afraid, sahiba. I am full of pity for you. I look into the years . . . away out into the years . . . and the veil is drawn from them. [*For a moment he is silent, staring far away before him, and moving his hand slowly, as though drawing a veil from something*]. I am looking at a woman . . . out there . . . among the shadows. She is driven by desire . . . the illusion of desire . . . as a cloud before the wind. Sorrow is in her heart, and in her hands. And to all she giveth sorrow . . . to him who loves her . . . to him she loves. She is a giver of sorrow. Can you not see her . . . out there . . . among the shadows?

RUTH *remains gazing, fascinated. He moves his hand as though following a vanishing form.*

There . . . [*He watches in silence*] she is gone . . . back into the stream of births . . . bound . . . bound to the wheel. [*Then nodding his head and speaking to himself, he goes slowly Right.*] A giver of sorrows . . . Perfect is the law . . . wise is the most excellent law.

He goes out Right.

RUTH *remains staring out at the shadows. A number of excited shouts are heard from below: "Shaba! Shaba! Shabaaa!"*

MRS FARAKER *enters Right, quickly.*

MRS F. Can you see them, Ruth; can you see them yet?

She goes to back.

RUTH. [*Faintly*] I don't think so . . . we've seen the helio working.

FARAKER *enters, followed by* DAVID *carrying a coat. More shouts below.*

MRS F. Then it's all right. Thank goodness! There's no doubt about it this time.

A cheer below—"Shaba! Shaba! Shabaaa! Shaba! Shaba! Shabaaa!"

What's that shouting, George?

FARAKER. Excitement, dear, excitement! The men's feelings are—er—excited . . . quite naturally.

MRS F. Nonsense! I'm not shouting, and I'm sure I'm as excited as any of them.

DAVID. The memsahib's coat. [*Holding it out*].

MRS F. [*Getting into it*] Of course . . . I wonder I remembered anything.

RUTH. You feel better, don't you, Louise?

MRS F. Haven't had time to think of anything except getting out of this dreadful place.

MACLAREN *enters the corridor Left.*

MACLAREN. Cheer up, Mrs Faraker; they're here.

MRS F. Who?

MACLAREN. First batch of the advance . . . don't know who yet.

He goes off Right. FARAKER *goes up and looks over the parapet.*

MRS F. Oh, thank goodness! thank goodness! [*To* RUTH] Oh, what a night I've had!

FARAKER. Can't see anyone from here.

Mrs F. I waked and had horrors, then slept and had worse horrors. It was all George's fault. He had a face like a cemetery, and when he did make a remark, it sounded like a dying groan.

FARAKER. [*Looking out*] Why, it's Jack! Ruth, it's your husband!

Excited murmurs and shouts can be heard coming nearer. RUTH *makes a step towards the entrance, then stops.*

DANGAN. [*Outside*] Hullo! hullo, George! Where is Ruth . . . is she there? [*He comes on*] Ruth! [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her*] Oh, my dear, thank God I've got you safe again! [*Holding her at arm's length*].

MACLAREN *and* MANNERS, *a subaltern in a native regiment, follow him on.*

RUTH. Have you . . . been very anxious, Jack?

DANGAN. Anxious! Well—it's all right now. [*Kissing her gently. He turns away*] Cis, dear, how are you? [*Kissing her*].

MRS F. Immensely relieved, like the rest of the garrison.

DANGAN. [*Shaking hands with* FARAKER] By Jove! you've got out of an ugly scrape, George.

MRS F. Yes, it's been a cheerful picnic, hasn't it?

DANGAN. [*Turning*] This is Mr Manners. He and

I took all the risks and got first past the post. My wife, my sister, Mr Faraker.

The women bow, murmuring "'How d'ye do?"

MANNERS. [*Bowing*] How d'ye do? How d'ye do? [*Cheerfully*] Awfully jolly to find you all right.

MACLAREN. We had a bad scare last night, sir. The ladies didn't know, of course, but a lama came in with the news that the relief force had been cut up and driven back.

MRS F. [*To* FARAKER] So that's what made you look like a funeral.

FARAKER. Not at all, not at all. . . . I didn't believe it.

MACLAREN. Did you have any fighting, sir?

DANGAN. Yes; in the morning a section of the advanced guard got ambushed near a place called——

MACLAREN. Langano.

DANGAN. That's the name. They had about twenty casualties. I suppose he thought it was the whole force. [*Laughing*].

MACLAREN. I expect so. But the beggar was so circumstantial he put the fear of God into us.

DANGAN. Pity he didn't wait. We gave them an infernal doing about two hours later. But where is Yeullat?

MACLAREN. [*Looking off*] Here he comes. [*Calling*] Yeullat! Yeullat!

YEULLAT *enters Left.*

DANGAN. [*Grasping his hand*] Yeullat, my dear fellow, my dear old fellow, it's good to see you again. It was a big thing, this . . . and I'm proud of you,

proud of you . . . the old regiment again. . . . I can't tell you what I feel, not now. Just, thank you! [*With a final wrench he relinquishes his hand*].

YEULLAT. [*Awkwardly*] You needn't thank me, sir . . . there's been very little to do.

DANGAN. Little! [*Putting his hand on* RUTH'S *shoulder*] You've given me back the one thing in the world I couldn't lose.

YEULLAT. Any credit for that belongs to Maclaren. He brought them in here . . . he got the only stiff fighting there was. . . . I didn't come in till the finish.

MACLAREN. It would have been "finish" without you.

MRS F. Well, I think they both ought to have the V.C.

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] Then you'd better see to it, Cis.

MACLAREN. You know, I feel we ought all to finish up to-night with supper at the Carlton, what? [*He laughs, and the* OTHERS *laugh with him, except* RUTH *and* YEULLAT] By Jove! though, I thought last night I'd never see London again. [*To* MANNERS] Got a cigarette on you?

MANNERS *offers him his case. He lights up.*

MRS F. Are you in command, Jack?

DANGAN. [*Laughing*] When I'm in command I don't usually come ahead of the advanced guard. I'm only a passenger. Stapleton's in command.

A cheer down below—"Bawaji ke khalsas! Swevowaji ke fateh!"

MRS F. Listen!

MANNERS. More of 'em coming in . . . they'll be dribbling in all the morning.

MRS F. Let's go down and see them.

[*She moves up with* MANNERS.

FARAKER. [*To* DANGAN] Of course they'll be able to send us back to-day?

DANGAN. You must ask Stapleton, George. I can't do anything.

MRS F. Come along, George. *She goes out Right.*

FARAKER. I see, I see. . . . I'll ask him.

He goes out Right.

The heliograph can be seen working again from one of the nearer hills.

MACLAREN. [*Going to the parapet*] They're signalling again, Yeullat.

YEULLAT. Right. I'll go up.

DANGAN. [*To* MACLAREN, *going to the parapet*] Where have you got your helio?

MACLAREN. Up on the roof.

YEULLAT. [*Going up*] Send the havildar up to me.

MACLAREN. Right.

DANGAN. Couple of hours before Stapleton gets here.

MACLAREN. Oh, quite that! *He goes off Right.*

YEULLAT. [*In a low tone to* RUTH] I'm ready . . . when you want me.

RUTH *bends her head.* YEULLAT *goes off Left.*

DANGAN *turns and looks at* RUTH, *who is standing down Left. Then he comes down a little, looking after* YEULLAT.

DANGAN. Yeullat! [*Going to* RUTH] Isn't it strange how things happen, Ruth? It's one of my own regiment . . . for he's always that to me . . . who gives me back my wife. [*He takes her in his arms and kisses her*] We don't understand the working of things, dear; we can just be grateful for them. [*Stroking her hair*] It's been a terrible time for you, my dear, but it's over now . . . all over.

RUTH. [*Speaking with effort*] I . . . I wasn't afraid.

DANGAN. No; you're a brave woman . . . you were always that. But I know I shall never forget these last few days. Last night, there was one time —we did a night march till the moon set—when it came over me . . . a sort of sudden terror . . . that I was never going to see you again. And now . . . well, I do thank God, from the bottom of my heart.

RUTH *clenches her hands tightly, controlling herself with an effort.*

RUTH. We . . . I don't think . . . we were in very great danger.

DANGAN. Perhaps not, but . . . don't let's talk about it. I've got you safe again, all to myself. And now I've got to cheer you up, and help you to forget it, eh? [*He puts his hands on her shoulders, turning her to him*] You look worn, dear . . . the strain's told on you . . . your dear face is almost sad.

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] It hasn't done me any harm.

DANGAN. You'll be all right once we get you safe home. It'll be good to have you home again. You

know, dear, when you're away . . . I oughtn't to grumble . . . but it isn't home. It's nothing but a dreary bungalow . . . [*Turning away*] I hate the sight of the walls.

RUTH. [*Speaking with an effort*] Jack.

DANGAN. [*Turning*] Yes?

RUTH. I want . . . there's something . . . I want to say to you.

DANGAN. [*Turning*] Well, dear, what is it?

RUTH. [*After a pause*] I . . . it's hard to say . . . only . . . I wonder if you ever noticed anything . . . in me . . . a change . . . during these last two years?

[*A pause. He comes over to her.*

DANGAN. My dear, it's a strange thing that you should say that to me. Do you know, that's the very thing I've been making up my mind to speak to you about.

RUTH *stares at him. He goes on gently.* I know . . . I know what you're going to tell me.

RUTH. You know!

DANGAN. Yes, I know. I've noticed it . . . the change. I've been worrying about it . . . for some time now. And then somehow . . . in these last terrible days, it's come home to me . . . the meaning of it . . . about our life together, that I . . . that perhaps I wasn't being fair to you.

RUTH. It's not that . . . it's not that! You don't——

DANGAN. Wait, dear . . . Let me tell you——

RUTH. [*Desperately*] But you don't know . . . and I've got to tell you.

DANGAN. Afterwards. Sit down . . . you're tired. Sit down, dear, and listen to me. [*He makes her sit on the saddle, and stands above her.*] Ruth, dear, I'm afraid you've not been very happy lately . . . at home. I've seen it . . . and I've begun to realise that it must be my fault.

She makes a movement to speak, and then, as he stops her, sits staring with a face of blank misery.

Yes, yes, my fault, even if I can't help it. You see, dear, you're young. You're nearly twenty years younger than I am. It isn't natural that the same kind of life should suit us both. I'm afraid life's very dull for you, at the station. I've got my work . . . a man gets into a groove, I suppose . . . that makes him forget. . . . And then . . . we've no children . . . that would have made all the difference. But now . . . well, I've thought it over and over, and I know what's got to be done . . . I've made up my mind to retire, now, this year, before I'm an old fogey; and we'll go back home together and get into a different life . . . new interests, new people, new places . . . make a fresh start together. We can travel on the Continent . . . you'd like that, Ruth. Or we might settle down in the country for a bit . . . or London. There are lots of things to be done. Anything . . . anything that will make you happy. That's the only thing I want.

RUTH. Don't . . . don't!

With a sob she hides her face in her hands.

DANGAN. [*Stroking her hair.*] You are all I've got

to love. If you are not happy, well . . . what am I for? I've sometimes wondered if . . . you see you were only a girl, you were at the beginning of life, and I . . . well, I was near the down-hill, anyway . . . if I didn't do you a wrong in marrying you.

RUTH. [*Looking up*] You . . . never . . . did me a wrong.

DANGAN. I shouldn't like you to think that, dear. After all, I'm a fairly young man. . . . I don't feel old. But I must get out of the groove . . . begin again, begin again . . . that's it. *We* mustn't drift away from each other. In these four or five days . . . I never slept a wink . . . I realised it . . . all that you meant to me . . . the thought, the terror of losing you . . . everything in the world . . . because, dear, you're all . . . [*Stroking her hair*] you're wife and children . . . both. [*His voice has grown a little husky. He turns away, going up stage a little, then a moment or two later, he turns to her again*]. That's what I wanted to tell you, dear . . . everything. Was I right . . . is that all . . . is that what you wanted to say to me?

RUTH. [*Staring in front of her, after a long pause*] Yes . . . that's . . . what I wanted . . . to say.

He bends down and kisses her forehead.

DANGAN. Well, we'll talk about it again . . . often. We've got plans to make . . . lots of plans . . . when we get back to the station. And then, fresh start . . . begin again.

She rises with a stone-like face.

RUTH. [*In a dull tone*] Yes.

DANGAN. [*Looking at her*] Is anything the matter, Ruth?

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] I'm tired.

DANGAN. My poor child! Go and lie down, get some rest. Yes, the strain has been too much for you. [*He pats her shoulder*] I must go down now and see how things are getting on. Go and rest, dear

He goes out Right.

A moment later the HAVILDAR *enters, crossing towards Left.* RUTH *turns.*

RUTH. Havildar! [*He comes down*] Yeullat sahib ko hamara salaam dedo.

The HAVILDAR *salutes and goes out Left.* RUTH *sits on the divan for some moments with her hands clasped tightly together on her knees. Then with a shiver she rises and walks slowly across to the altar, where she remains looking up at the Buddha. A little later* YEULLAT *comes on.* RUTH *turns to him as he comes in.*

YEULLAT. [*Looking round*] Where is he?

RUTH. Tim . . . I couldn't . . . I couldn't do it.

YEULLAT. [*Staring at her*] You haven't told him?

She shakes her head slowly.

RUTH. [*After a pause*] I can't . . . leave him.

He comes over to her, looking into her face.

I can't.

YEULLAT. [*Bowing his head*] Ruth!

RUTH. [*Putting out her hand and touching him*] Oh, my dear!

For a moment they stand silent, without moving.

I tried . . . I tried to tell him . . . [*A pause*] He said I was all he had to love . . . wife and children to him . . . his voice broke almost . . . and I couldn't bear it.

YEULLAT. Yes . . . I know.

RUTH. I knew, all the time, that I had only to say it . . . that we loved each other, you and I . . . just those little words . . . and we should be free. I sat listening . . . wondering when I should speak . . . listening. It was his perfect trust, the blind faith in me. . . . And then, suddenly, so that I cried out with the pain of it, I saw . . . that it just wasn't possible.

YEULLAT. When he took my hand, and thanked me . . . . I knew that. [*He turns away, shutting his lips tightly*]. What are we going to do?

RUTH. I am going back with him.

YEULLAT. Yes.

RUTH. He says he wants to retire, to travel, to take me home to England . . . anything that will make me happy.

YEULLAT. Will you go?

She shakes her head slowly.

RUTH. Every place will be the same to me . . . and it would hurt him.

YEULLAT. That is right.

RUTH. We . . . we mustn't see each other again.

YEULLAT. No. I must try for an exchange. Burmah or——

RUTH. Tim!

YEULLAT. It will be better . . . if the sea is between us. . . . Things are different . . . now.

RUTH. I seem always to be making you go away . . . out of the regiment first . . . now out of India . . . my love has been a trouble to you.

YEULLAT. It's been the only real thing in my life.

She puts her hand on his arm.

RUTH. Whatever I suffer, whatever I've got to suffer, [*almost fiercely*] I'm glad that we met . . . I'm glad that we loved . . . I'm glad that we belonged to each other. That's our life . . . Nothing can take that from us. [*Gently*] Tim, if we went away together —should we be happy always—I wonder. We're not hard enough . . . we're not cruel. Only the hard people can take everything they want in this world.

The men below are heard cheering. YEULLAT *turns.*

RUTH. [*Quickly*] Are you going?

YEULLAT. I can't meet *him* again. When Stapleton comes I'll get him to take me on. . . . I know the country better than anyone he's got.

RUTH. Don't be afraid . . . I'm going to be strong. Love made me weak. But it's going to make me strong now. . .

YEULLAT. [*Taking her hands*] Oh, my love!

RUTH. [*With sudden exaltation*] I will believe in reincarnation, I will believe in heaven . . . I will believe in anything that will promise to give you back to me. Kiss me, kiss me, just this once.

He takes her in his arms and kisses her.

RUTH. [*Clinging to him*] Tim, Tim, you won't forget . . . you won't forget me?

He draws back from her, holding her hands, and looks straight into her eyes.

Is that cruel of me?

YEULLAT. Forget . . . Ruth!

RUTH. [*Shaking her head*] No, you are not the kind that forgets.

YEULLAT. Good-bye.

RUTH. [*Strongly*] No . . . no! There's no good-bye . . . no good-bye . . . not for us. Just say: "I love and I wait."

YEULLAT. I love and I wait.

RUTH. Now go!

She makes a quick gesture, putting him away, and stands with her hands up, tense and curved, and looking away from him. He turns and goes quickly out.

She remains rigid, listening as the footsteps die away. Then slowly her head turns in the direction he has gone. The hands begin to tremble; a low cry comes from her.

Tim! . . . Tim! [*She sinks down, hiding her face in her hands*].

The LAMA *comes on from the lower entrance Right. In one hand he carries a bundle of the little red flowers, the other is fingering his rosary. As he is going to the altar he sees* RUTH, *goes over a little way and stands looking down at her.*

LAMA. Sahiba!

She looks up slowly.

They who overcome desire
From them their sorrows fall,
As tears fall from the eyes,
As the dew-drops from the flowers.

He holds out the flowers, shaking the dew from them; he nods his head gently to her several times, then goes towards the altar, speaking to himself.

Ahi! the way is hard . . . we be fools of illusion . . . suffering . . . until we be free . . . free from the Wheel.

He strews the flowers before the Buddha, then sprinkles incense on the lamp and bends down in prayer.

RUTH. [*Staring out at a thought far away*] Free . . . from the Wheel!

CURTAIN

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